BENGAL
DISTRICT
GAZETTEERS

MALDA

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BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

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BY

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INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

MALDA DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION. BOUNDARIES.

THE district of Mālda, which with that of Dinājpur forms the western portion of the Rājshāhī Division of Bengal, lies between 24°30′ and 25°32′ 30″ north latitude and 87°48′ and 88° 33′ 30″ east longitude. It extends over 1,899 square miles, and is bounded on the north by the Purnea and Dinājpur districts, on the east by Dinājpur and Rājshāhī, on the south by Murshidābād, and on the west by Murshidābād, the Sonthal Parganās and Purnea. English Bāzār, situated at the centre of the district in 25°0′ 14″ N. and 88°11′ 20″ E., is the chief town and administrative headquarters.

Origin of name.

The district was formed of outlying portions of the Purnea and Dinājpur districts in 1813, though it did not formally become an independent administrative unit till 1859. It takes its name from the town of Mālda, which is situated on the left bank of the Mahānandā river at its junction with the Kālindrī river, and is about four miles north of English Bāzār (Engrezābād). A story is current of an old woman buying up the entire stock of mercury of a merchant who had come to the place to trade and who had been unable to dispose of his goods. Her wealth (*māl*) was such that she was able to devote all her purchase to cleaning one tank only, called the Pārāpukur (mercury tank) to this day, and thus to give the place the name of Mālda or the place of wealth. Another fanciful derivation is from *Mālādāh*, a string of deep pools, a feature of the town being the deep depressions left by old water courses.

At the present time the tendency is to transfer the name of Mālda to English Bāzār and to call Mālda, Old Mālda. For telegraphic, postal, steamer and railway purposes the names of English Bāzār and Mālda are Mālda and Nimāsarāi, respectively.

Natural Divisions.

The river Mahānandā flowing north and south roughly divides the district into two equal parts, corresponding by local tradition to the old boundary line of the Rārh and Bārendra. To this day the country to the east of the Mahānandā is called the *bārind.* Its characteristic feature is the relatively high land of the red clay soil of the old alluvium. West of the Mahānandā the country is again divided into two well defined parts by the Kālindrī river flowing west and east from the Ganges. North of the Kālindrī the distinguishing natural feature is the *tāl* land, the name applied to the land which floods deeply as the rivers rise, and drains by meandering streams into swamps or into the Kālindrī. There are extensive tracts of this land covered, where not cultivated, with tall grass in Ratua and Tulsīhātā thānās. South of the Kālindrī lies the most fertile and populous portion of the district. It is seamed throughout by old courses of the Ganges, upon the banks of one of which the city of Gaur once stood. The most striking natural feature is the continuous line of islands and accretions formed in the bed of the Ganges by its ever changing currents and known as the *diāra,** the long open stretches of which contrast with the patchwork-like effect of the miles of small embanked mulberry fields characteristic of the higher lands of this portion of the district.

Hills.

There are no hills in the district, unless a few elevated tracts in the *bārind* may be so described. Parts of these high lands have an elevation of from 50 to 100 feet above the level of the Ganges, and, being frequently intersected by deep water-channels, simulate the appearance of small hills.

Scenery.

Apart from these undulations the country is a low-lying plain covered with a succession of village sites with their adjacent fields and swampy tracts.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The main rivers of the district are all of Himalayan or sub-Himalayan origin and flow in a southerly direction, their rise being controlled by the Ganges, which forms two-thirds of the western and the whole of the south-western boundary of the district. Next to the Ganges the most important is the Mahānandā which, flowing north and south through the middle of the district, receives on its right bank the waters of the Kālindrī, and from the east those of the Tāngan and the Pūrnabhābā before itself joining the Ganges near Godāgāri. With the rise of the Ganges the discharge of the Mahānandā lessens, the

* The *diāra* is the low bank of a river and *karāra* the high bank. By extension these terms are commonly used to mean land below and above flood level, respectively, in the later alluvium.

Tāngan and the Pūrnabhābā bank up and flow backwards expanding into huge lakes, whilst the slackened flow of the Kālindrī causes a similar phenomenon in respect of the network of small streams which drain the *tāl*. Two other streams of importance are the Paglā and the Bhāgīrathī which, though they dry up into lines of pools in the cold weather, become large back-waters within the district, of the main stream of the Ganges in the rains. A short account of the rivers of the district is given below.

The Ganges

The Ganges first touches the district as it sweeps south round the Rājmahāl hills. At this point it is connected in the rains by various channels with the Kālindrī, though at the present time much Ganges water does not find its way down the Kālindrī, the mouths of the connections having silted up considerably as the Ganges has receded to the west. It would seem, however, that in this neighbourhood there has always been a navigable junction between the two rivers in the rains. Doctor Buchanan Hamilton, indeed, describes the lower part of the Kālindrī, between this point and the town of Mālda, as a branch of the Ganges. About two miles below Rājmahāl the Ganges sends off a small stream, the Chhōta Bhāgīrathī, which is presumably an old bed of the great river itself and is still revered as at least equal in holiness to any other part of the sacred stream. It runs first to the east and then generally in a southerly direction, bordering for about 13 miles the ruins of the city of Gaur. A little way further down, the Ganges sends off, also to the east, a larger branch, the Paglā, into which the Chhōta Bhāgīrathī ultimately flows. After their junction they flow past Kānsāt merging near Tārtipur into the Māra Ganga. In the map the main stream of the Ganges is shown as flowing past Tārtipur: at the present day, however, the island cut off by the Paglā extends right down to the mouth of the Mahānandā, and there are a number of *dāras* or channels which connect the Māra Ganga with the main stream in the rains. During the rains these carry off immense volumes of water to rejoin the Ganges near the mouth of the Mahānandā. Somewhere above the point where it finally leaves the district, the Ganges sends off southwards a branch which retains the name of the Bhāgīrathī, while the great river thenceforth loses the larger part of its sanctity. Boats come from East Bengal to bring Ganges water from Tārtipur as being the nearest present point of the sacred stream to East Bengal.

Alluvion and diluvion are perpetually taking place on the Mālda bank, which is throughout of sand, offering little

resistance to the changes of the current. An ordinary incident in the life of a riverain dweller is the hasty removal of his lightly built house to a new site and the complete disappearance of his lands, which reform as sandy *chars* miles away. An historical instance of wider destruction is the complete obliteration of the town of Tanra, an important city of Mahomedan times situated near Gaur. The Ganges is navigable throughout the year by steamers and country boats, and is nowhere fordable.

The Mahānandā.

The Mahānandā, flowing from Purnea, first touches the district at its extreme north, from which point it forms its north-eastern boundary for about 25 miles, receiving as its sole tributary the Nagar from the east. It then enters the district and for the remainder of its course, in a direction that is almost due south, divides it, as has already been mentioned, into two nearly equal portions, finally falling into the Ganges at the southernmost point of the district. Its entire course within the district would be about 80 miles in a straight line, but its numerous windings add largely to that distance. At one time it formed a most important channel of through communication between Lower Bengal and the sub-Himalayan districts, but the construction of railways has diminished its importance in this respect, and at the present time the traffic on it is mainly in local exports and imports. Up to Mālda its average width is from 50 to 100 yards, the waterway at the railway bridge at Bargachi being 220 feet; the banks of sand and clay are steep and of about the same height, and cultivation is general. Below Mālda, where it receives the water of the Kālindrī, it widens out to an average of 200 to 600 yards: its banks are alternately sheer and sloping: the cultivation is more intense and population denser. Throughout the channel is generally deep, but the silting up of the Kālindrī connections with the Ganges has diminished the volume of water it carries, so that in the dry season it becomes fordable in several places even as far down as Nawābganj. In the rains, when the snows melt, the river rises 20 to 30 feet and even more in years of high flood. Occasionally the river straightens itself across a loop, as at Gumāstāpur in 1867 and at Churamon in 1909, but in general the diluvion and alluvion which goes on is more gradual.

The Kālindrī.

Of its tributaries, the Kālindrī enters the district from Purnea near Hātichāpa. The main body of its waters are brought down from the mountains of Nepal by the Panar, which assumes the name of Kālindrī shortly before its entrance into the district. In the rains, as has been noticed, it connects

with the Ganges on its right bank: on its left it receives the drainage of the *tāl* land of the west of Tulsīhātā and Ratuā thānās by a network of streams, of which the most important are the Kap, Kos, Kankar and Kalkas, all of which cease to flow in the cold weather. It runs in a south-easterly direction and with a very winding course till it meets the Māhanandā at Mālda, the distance in a straight line being about 30 miles. Its banks of sand and clay are generally steep and about the same height, though, as in the lower reaches of the Mahānāndā, there are stretches of sloping bank where alluvion and diluvion has taken place. Cultivation is general and population dense from Bhaluka downwards: it is nowhere fordable in the rains.

The Tāngan and Pūrnabhābā. The Tāngan and Pūrnabhābā on the left bank are the next important tributaries of the Mahānāndā; these rivers flow from Dinājpur into the north-eastern corner of the district, where there are connections between them. At this point the country is low (*duba*) and of later alluvium. This low land continues into the district by the two broad valleys of the Tāngan and Pūrnabhābā, which are divided by a triangular stretch of *bārind* country, the base of the triangle being a line roughly parallel to the Mahānandā and a few miles from it, whilst its general direction runs north and south. The northernmost of these valleys, that of the Tāngan, has on its west the *bārind* which touches the Mahānandā at Mālda: its length is about 30 miles and in places it extends to several miles in width. The river (Tāngan) winds circuitously through the valley and meets the Mahānandā at Muchia Aiho, at which point the waterway of the railway bridge is 200 feet: in 1807, when Dr. Buchanan Hamilton completed his manuscript, the point of junction was at Ahorganj, seven miles further south. The position of the remains of an embanked road and stone bridge at Rāniganj, a hunting seat of the kings of Gour, shows also that there have been variations in the course of the river at that place. A small stream joins the river near Bāmongolā from the west: higher up at Nālāgolā the channel has been canalised in places and a navigable connection established with the Pūrnabhābā. The latter river has a valley similar to that of the Tāngan through which it winds till it joins the Mahānandā at Makrampur about a mile below Rohanpur, at which place a small stream from the east falls into it. The waterway of the railway bridge at Rohanpur is 200 feet. Both the Tāngan and the Pūrnabhābā have steep banks, particularly where they pass through *bārind* formation; their average width is about 40

The Pūrnabhābā.

yards. Mention has already been made of the way in which they expand over their valleys in the rains.

On the right bank of the Mahānandā are two channels with mouths opposite Gumāstāpur and Nawābganj, which connect through the *bils* (swamps) with a channel called the Jaharpur Dāra. This latter channel runs into the Paglā at Kānsāt and appears to be a natural formation artificially deepened to admit of the passage of large boats in the rainy season between the Mahānandā and the Paglā. At the present time the channels from the Mahānandā have silted so considerably as to make through navigation possible only in years of high flood.

SWAMPS. A feature of the drainage of the district is the line of swamps (*bils*) which extends along the right bank of the Mahānandā from the Kālindrī past the east face of Gaur right down to opposite Nawābganj. Of these the largest is the Batiya *bil* near Bholāhāt. North of the Kālindrī the *bils*, though smaller in size, continue both parallel to the Mahānandā and also between the Kālindrī and the railway line up to the Ratua *tāl*.

GEOLOGY. The district is covered by alluvium. The *bārind* belongs to an older alluvial formation, which is usually composed of massive argillaceous beds of a rather pale reddish-brown hue, often weathering yellowish, disseminated throughout which occur *kankar* and pisolithic ferruginous concretions. The low-lying country to the west of the Mahānandā and in the south is of more recent formation, consisting of sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers and fine silt consolidating into clay in the flatter parts of the river plain. West of the Mahānandā a formation similar to that of the older alluvium of the *bārind* outcrops for three or four miles northwards from Kendaram railway station: it is also found underlying, near the surface, part of the *tāl* in that direction showing that the present surface of the district is the result of denudation of the old alluvium of North Bengal, between which and the Rājmahāl Hills the Ganges and other Himalayan water has forced its way south from the west.

FAUNA. Hunter remarks that "Mālda has always been celebrated for the unusual quantity of large game which it affords and especially for its tiger hunting." Their breeding grounds were the *kātāl* (thorny scrub jungle of the *bārind*) and the jungle-covered ruins of Gaur and Pandua: their hunting grounds the grassy swamps which cover such considerable areas of the district and stretch away into Purnea and Dinājpur towards the hills. The last three decades have, however, seen the district

cut off for wild animals from the Terai by the construction of the sub-Himalayan railways, and the jungles cleared and their inhabitants exterminated by the Sonthals and Pahārias, who have crossed the Ganges in large numbers to settle in the *bārind* and other parts of the country. At the present time a tiger is somewhat of a rarity and is invariably a wanderer. The carnivora of the district are now represented by leopards and other smaller species. The ungulata comprise hog-deer and wild pig.

Leopards are fairly common, particularly in the vicinity of English Bāzār and Mālda, where the undergrowth in the mango gardens and the deep ditches of the mulberry fields give them sufficient shelter. The Gaur variety is larger than the ordinary leopard of the village jungles, but has now become rare. The depredations of these animals are usually confined to cattle, pigs, goats, village dogs, jackals and monkeys. Some years ago there was a man-eating leopard near English Bāzār which carried off seven boy cow-herds before it was destroyed. Hog-deer are scarce, a few are to be found in the Shirshi and Singābād jungles. Wild pigs, though not in great numbers, are common and do some injury to crops.

Game Birds.

The game birds of the district are jungle fowl, swamp and black partridge, button quail, green pigeon, pea-fowl and lesser florican, the last two being somewhat rare. Two varieties of geese are found, the bar-headed and pink-beaked, and among ducks the brahminy, mallard, red-headed pochard, pin-tail, merganser, pearl-eyed and grey are the most common. Besides these there are found the common blue-winged teal, whistling teal, cotton teal, grey and golden plovers, four varieties of snipe and the usual waders of Bengal.

Fish.

The rivers and *bils* of Mālda contain quantities of fish, of which may be mentioned the mullet, *rahu*, *katla*, *chital*, *sir*, *boail*, *nanin*, *magor*, *saul*, *hilsa*, and varieties of crabs, prawns, eels, turtles, and rays. *Bhekti* are sometimes met with. Snub-nosed or man-eating crocodiles are very plentiful, particularly in the tanks and ponds of Gaur. The fish-eating alligator or *ghariāl* is common in the rivers, where also porpoises abound. Otters are common in the *bils*.

BOTANY.

The flora of Mālda is merely a small portion of that extending from the Kosi to the Brahmaputra, an alternation of *bils* and village shrubberies with the drier jungle of the *bārind* formation. Where the ground is not occupied by the usual crops of Northern Bengal, it is covered by an abundant natural vegetation except in the sandy beds of the greater rivers, where the few annual plants that establish themselves are

swept away by the floods of the following season. Old river beds, however, ponds and marshes, and streams with a sluggish current have a copious vegetation of *Vallisneria* and other plants. Land subject to inundation has usually a covering of *Tamarix* and reedy grasses, and in some parts where the ground is more or less marshy *Rosa involucrata* is plentiful; few trees occur on these inundated lands; the most plentiful and largest is the *hijāl* (*Barringtonia acutangula*). Portions of the *bārind* are covered by the jungle locally known as *kātāl*. This consists chiefly of thorny scrub bush-jungle mixed with an abundance of *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*), *bar* or *bat* (*Ficus indica*), *simul* and *pakur* trees and *nipal* bamboos. A species of thorny bamboo known as *beurbans* is common in Pandua, and there is a considerable wood of *sal* near Pakurhāt: palmyra trees are also common. Near villages, thickets or shrubberies of semi-spontaneous more or less useful trees of a rapid growth and weedy character, are usual and sometimes extensive, in addition to the ordinary *nim*, jack fruit trees, tamarind, bamboo, *pipal* and mango. Dense thickets of this nature are a feature of the uncleared embankments of Gaur. The western half of the district is particularly suited to the growth of mulberry and mango, for the last named of which Mālda is famous. In the wide fields of the *diāra* the *babul* and *ber* trees are fairly plentiful; both are in demand for their hard wood suitable for cart wheels, whilst on the second, lac is grown. Of other trees common in this western half of the district may be particularised the date palm and the palmyra palm.

CLIMATE. The year is divided into the three usual seasons. The rains commence about the middle of June and continue into October, the middle of July to the middle of September being the period of greatest rainfall. The cold season lasts from the beginning of November till the middle of February: in December and January the cold after sundown is such as to make a fire agreeable. The cold weather disappears with the coming of the *paschima* or west winds which are usual in March and April. In May and June the air becomes stagnant and oppressive as the wind changes to the east.

Winds. From the middle of March to the middle of May there are strong winds from the west, hot and interrupted by squalls, generally accompanied by thunderstorms, rain and often by hail of a great size. From the middle of May to the rainy season winds are light and from the east. During the rains the wind is from the south veering to the east at their close. The prevailing wind in the cold weather is north.

The months from November to April are dry and fine, the normal rainfall of each being under one inch. The monsoon breaks normally in the middle of June, the months of heaviest rainfall being July, August and September, with mean rainfalls of 13·40, 11·18 and 11·19 inches, respectively. The mean rainfall for the cold weather, hot weather and rains for the years 1892 to 1911 recorded at English Bāzār was 1·66, 6·33 and 48·95 inches, respectively, the annual mean rainfall being 56·94. Rainfall.

Mean temperature increases from 63° in January to 86° in May, the average for the year being 78°. The highest mean maximum is 97° in April and the lowest 50° in January. TEMPERATURE.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

THE district of Mālda contains within its limits the sites of Pandua and Gaur, the capital cities of Bengal throughout mediæval times. The two towns are almost equidistant north and south from English Bāzār and on opposite sides of the Mahānandā, Gaur being on the western and Pandua on the eastern. They contain some of the most interesting remains now to be found in Bengal. The early history of both these cities, as of the kingdoms of which they formed part, is very obscure. It is still uncertain which of them is the older. If, however, the claims of Pandua to identity with Paundranagar be admitted, Pandua is the older town, epitomizing as a ruling city the Bengal of early history when the foreign influences with which it was in contact were from the east and north. Similarly Gaur stands for Aryan and Buddhistic rule, followed in later times by the Brahminism of the early middle ages. Later both cities were for five centuries the centres of Mahomedan rule in the province. Their history is consequently the history of Bengal from the earliest times till the 17th century.

Of the district as apart from these towns it may be said it has no history. A characteristic feature of Hindu and Mahomedan rule in Bengal was its purely autocratic nature; the ruling dynasties were the heads of bodies of fighting men who were constantly renewed from outside the province. In districts remote from the royal headquarters the king's man would establish a sort of local kingship which, with the help of forces locally raised, might defy the king's rule and in periods of weakness of the central power establish petty independent kingdoms. In the immediate vicinity, however, of the capital the power of the king always prevented the rise of these local kinglets. In fact, the only tradition in the district of a small local raja is that connected with the high land near the Kendaran railway station which is said to have been the site of a palace of such a kinglet. Of the population of the towns of Gaur and Pandua a considerable proportion was certainly formed by the military and official elements on which depended

the artisan and trading classes. Practically nothing is known of the industries of the towns, but it may be conjectured that from their position on the main river route between Bengal and Western India they were the entrepots of the trade of the province; it may be observed that the words Gaur and Pandua have been interpreted as deriving from the sugar trade of these towns.

Pandua-vardhana.

That portion of the district, the *bārind* or Bārendrabhum of the Sen dynasty, in which Pandua lies, comes into history earlier as part of the kingdom of Panduavardhana. As is the case with the rest of Bengal, no mention is made of it in the epics of India except as an abode of barbarians. It is generally stated that Panduavardhana takes its name from a people known as the Pods, of Mongoloid extraction. Wilson connects the Pods with the modern caste of Puros, whose original occupation was sugar boiling and who are to be found in some numbers as silk-worm-rearers in the district. Subsequently the country was overrun by Koch tribes and afterwards by a tribe known as Bhars. At one time it was connected with a kingdom to the west, of which the inhabitants were the forebears of the modern Ganesh caste. The chief city of the kingdom was Paundranagar which is identified by some authorities with Pandua. With the consolidation and extension of the Aryan power from Magadha the country became merged politically in the empires which centred on that province, and inter-penetrated with Aryan influences under Aryan rulers and immigrants. Buddhism became the religion of its rulers and continued to be so after the break-up of these empires, when the province appears as a petty principality. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, who visited India from 629 to 645 A. D., describes Panduavardhana as a kingdom of 700 miles circumference, the capital having a circumference of 5 miles. He makes no mention of any independent ruler. The traveller speaks of the number of the tanks, the redness of the soil and of the way in which the dwelling-houses have their walls made of earth, all of which suggests that he is referring to this part of the *bārind*, though the distances he gives from the Ganges makes the identification of Paundranagar with Pandua somewhat difficult.

The really authenticated history of Pandua begins in Mahomedan times with the removal of the capital there from Gaur by Shamsuddīn Ilyās Shāh about the year 1353 A. D. The reason assigned for its choice as the capital at that time is that its position, with rivers and swamps protecting it from

attack from every side but the north, made it a suitable defensive position against the attacks of the Delhi Emperor with whom the Afghan king of Gaur was at war. Hunter in the Statistical Account takes accordingly the view that Pandua is a later city than Gaur, merely a military outpost of the Mahomedan kings of Gaur, which, with the fort of Ekdālā, 20 miles further north, protected Gaur from the tribes of the north-east and gave a safe asylum against attacks from the west, and that it was constructed with material from Gaur. It is the existence, however, of Hindu remains incorporated, with little or no alteration, in Mahomedan buildings which distinguish the buildings of Pandua from those of Gaur. It is unlikely that the Hindu and Buddhistic remains to be found in Pandua should have been brought from Gaur to the almost utter obliteration of such remains in the latter place. These remains are found over large areas in Dinājpur district also, whereas they are comparatively uncommon in Mālda district proper. It is accordingly argued that in reality Pandua is the Paundranagar of antiquity and of the traveller Hiuen Tsang, and that the Mahomedan builders merely quarried the site of the older city for material. General considerations adduced in support of this view are that the number of tanks existing, made in pre-Mahomedan times, as their longer sides running from north to south attest, show that this particular tract of country must have been well populated and flourishing. In those times the valleys of the Purnabhābā and the Tāngan, as their size shows, must have been occupied by rivers of much greater volume than those now existing: at the same time the Ganges united with the Mahānandā above Pandua. What more natural than that Pandua, on hard soil and elevated above flood level, should have been the site of the capital of a well-watered and healthy region. The site of Paundranagar has, however, been identified by different authorities with other places, of which one, Mahasthan in Bogra district, lies in the *bārind*. It is known that during the time of the Pal kings the use of carved black stone in public buildings spread over the *bārind*. It may be that the stones now found in Pandua were collected from a distance from these buildings, bearing in mind that they are used only as ornamentation or facing for brick-work and only comparatively small quantities were required.

Gaur. Gaur or Gauda does not appear at any time to have been the name of any considerable tract of country in Bengal. The origin of the name is obscure; several other places in India

of historical importance bear the same name. Cunningham in the Archæological Reports connects the word with *gur* (molasses) and thinks it probable that the city of Gaur was originally a great sugar mart.

Sasanka who flourished about 606 A. D. was known as the king of Karna-subarna, the riverain tracts of the Padma, as well as king of Gauda. It is not till the time of the Pāla kings of Bengal that the history of Gaur in Bengal as a place in contradistinction to its use as a title for kings becomes clearer. The Pāla kings apparently established themselves originally in Bihar, and later founded the city of Gaur on the south of the Kālindrī and some miles to the north of the existing site. It was the principal city, or at any rate an important city, in their kingdom, which comprised Bihar and most of modern Bengal. The position on land above flood level at the confluence of the Mahānandā and the Kālindrī through which the main stream of the Ganges passed, lent itself to the strategic control of the communications between Bengal and the west, and in later days, the Mahomedan invaders equally recognised its advantages for that purpose. If Pandua be the old capital of Paundra-vardhana, the new capital merely meant the shifting to the nearest suitable place for building of the site of that city to follow the recession of the main stream of the Ganges from the vicinity of Pandua.

Pāla Dynasty.

The Pāla kings, whose dynasty begins at the end of the 8th century of the Christian era, were originally Buddhists, though the later members of the family became Hindus under Brahminical influences. Most of the stone-work bearing traces of Buddhistic art to be found in the ruins of the district belongs to their rule. The little that is known of the history of the period is mainly derived from inscriptions on copper and stone of which a number has been found in recent years in the modern district of Mālda and its neighbours. Many of these inscriptions refer to grants of land, and from them it is possible to reconstruct roughly the succession of Pāla kings. Among tablets found in the district may be mentioned that of Dharmapāla of date about 800 A. D. and which was discovered at Khalimpur near Gaur in 1893. Other important kings of the dynasty were Narayan Pāla (900—925 A. D.) and Mahipāla (980—1035 A. D.). It was in the reign of Mahipāla, about 1030 A. D., that a famous gathering of Buddhistic monks attended by envoys from Thibet took place.

Sen Dynasty.

The Pāla dynasty was supplanted, after reigning for 300 years, by the Sen Rajas at the beginning of the 11th century.

The first member of the Sen line of kings, Samanta Sen, is vaguely described as Brahma-khatriya by caste. His great-grandson, Ballāl Sen, the most famous Hindu King of Bengal, was reigning in Gaur in 1169 as ruler of Bengal and Mithila. The fame of Ballāl Sen rests mainly on the institution of Kulinism. This measure appears to have been an attempt to solve the problem of the social and religious confusion which had arisen in the dominant Aryan ruling classes from their contact with local beliefs, the pressure of Brahminism reinforced by fresh immigration from the west, and the legacy of the long period of Buddhism. The modern stereotyped separation of each of the higher castes of Bengal into Rarh and Barendra divisions is amongst the results of the policy of Ballāl, though in its inception that policy seems to have aimed at establishing an hierarchy based on the merits of the individual, and not on geographical distribution. In any case, the comparative case with which the Mahomedan invaders overran Bengal in the succeeding reign suggests that the policy failed to close the ranks even of the Aryan section of the population, much less to form the foundation for a union between the masses of the population and their Hindu rulers.

Of public works dating from the reign of Ballāl there still remain the Sāgardīghi tank and the ramparts of Gaur near Sādullāpur.

Lakshman Sen, the son of Ballāl, gave his name in the form of Lakhnauti or Lakshmanavati to the northern suburbs of Gaur. The site of his palace is pointed out near English Bāzār on the Rājmahāl road. He was the last of the Hindu kings of Gaur, for in 1194 he was overthrown at Nadia by Mahomed Ibn Bakhtiyār Khilji, the Lieutenant of the Delhi Emperor, who led the Mahomedan invasion of Bengal. It is said that Lakshman was told by his advisers that his kingdom would be overthrown by the Turkis or Mahomedans led by a warrior whose arms reached down to his knees, a physical peculiarity of Bakhtiyār, and on this account a less spirited resistance was made to the invaders.

Mahomedan Rule.

Bakhtiyār Khilji made his headquarters at Gaur and from that centre established Mahomedan rule over the greater part of Northern and Central Bengal, and attempted to subjugate Assam and Bhutan. After the death of Bakhtiyār Khilji a succession of Pathān chiefs, adventurers with Bakhtiyār, seized the throne, professing allegiance to Delhi as they were compelled. It may be said that the kings were elected by the Mahomedan fighting chiefs from amongst their numbers when they

were not imposed on them from Delhi. Of these chiefs who became kings may be mentioned Ghiyāsaddīn Khilji, who ruled from 1211 to 1227 A. D. He constructed an embanked road for military purposes from Rājnagar in Birbhum through Mālda to Debcote in Dinājpur. A portion of this road forms part of the present Rajmāhāl road near English Bāzār. Ghiyāsaddīn is said to have corresponded with the Caliphs of Bagdad through the Arab traders who visited Bengal by sea. He invaded Kamrup, Orissa and Bihar and an expedition was sent against him by the Emperor Altamash under the leadership of his son Nāsiraddīn. Ghiyāsaddīn was defeated and killed under the ramparts of Gaur and Nāsiraddīn became Governor in 1227.

The period of direct dependence on Delhi lasted till the middle of the 14th century : in this time the Mahomedan power was consolidated at Gaur and had pushed forward to found a new kingdom in East Bengal which centred on Sonargaon, of which the rulers were relatives or tributaries of the Gaur king. Resistance to the power of Gaur came mainly from Orissa. An episode in the history of Gaur in these times is an attack on it about the middle of the 13th century by the king of Orissa. Timur Khan, the Governor of Oudh, was sent by Imperial orders to assist Tughan Khan, an ex-Tartar slave who had been appointed Governor of Gaur from Delhi. Timur Khan arrived after the invaders had retreated with their plunder. A dispute arose between the two Governors, and in spite of attempts at mediation a battle was fought beneath the ramparts of Gaur, in which Tughan was defeated. Timur seized Gaur and ruled till his death (1246 *circa*). It is recorded that he died the same night as Tughan Khan, who had been made Governor of Oudh. Timur was followed by a succession of Governors, who were engaged chiefly in extending their power over the confines of Eastern Bengal. An incident in the Governorship of Izzaddin Balban was an attack by Tajaddin Arsalan Khan, the Imperial Governor of Kerah, who plundered Gaur. He was, however, captured and killed by Izzaddin on the latter's return from an expedition against some of the independent rajas of Eastern Bengal. Mahomed Tartar Khan, the son of Tajaddin, subsequently became Governor, being succeeded by Sher Khan and Amin Khan. Tughral, the Lieutenant of Amin Khan, rebelled against and imprisoned the latter, proclaiming himself king of Bengal under the title of Mughisaddin. It would appear that Tughral had rebelled on the news of the illness, which he thought would prove fatal, of the Emperor Balban, whose slave he had been. The Emperor recovered and marched against Gaur, declaring :

"We are playing for half my kingdom, and I will never return to Delhi, nor even mention its name till the blood of the rebel and his followers has been shed." Tughral Khan having been defeated and slain, Balban proceeded to teach the people of Gaur a sharp lesson on the dangers of revolt, the memory of which lasted for several generations. Gibbets were set up on both sides of the main street of the city for over two miles, and on them men, women and children were hanged, for days together, after indescribable tortures. The Emperor Balban then bestowed Bengal on his own son Nāsiraddīn Bugram Khan, on whose death Kādir Khān was appointed Viceroy, from Delhi. Eastern Bengal was at that time a separate Governorship, with its capital at Sonargaon, near Dacca. In 1338 A. D., on the death of the Governor of Eastern Bengal, his armour-bearer proclaimed himself kirg under the title of Mubarak Shāh. He attacked and killed Kādir Khān but was himself defeated by Ali Mubarak who had been in Kādir's service. Ali Mubarak established himself in Gaur under the title of Ali Shāh, and after a reign of six years was assassinated by his foster-brother, Hāji Ilyās. The latter took the title of Shāmsud-dīn Ilyās Shāh and reunited Eastern Bengal under Gaur, by defeating the ruler of that province. He attempted to extend his rule to the west and drew upon himself an attack from the Emperor Fīrōz Shāh. He transferred his capital to Pandua and was there besieged, but retreated to the fort of Ekdālā, 20 miles north of Pandua. After several years' fighting in the vicinity of old Mālda the Emperor made terms with him, and recognised his independence about the year 1357. The Court name of Pandua whilst it was the capital of Bengal was Fīrōzābād, which during this period regularly appears on the coins in place of Lakhnauti. Sikandar Shāh, the eldest son of Hāji Ilyās, succeeded his father on the throne, and reigned for 30 years. He built the great Adinah mosque at Pandua and was killed near Old Mālda in a battle with his rebellious son Ghiyāsaddīn, the ruler of Sonargaon. His name has been perpetuated in the measure of length known as the *Sikandar gaj* (yard); on account of his great height, he was himself known as Sikandar Chauhatta (four *hats*). His reign was one of great prosperity. One of his most prominent subjects was the Mahomedan saint Alal ul Huk, the father of Hazrat Nur Kutb Alam and the spiritual successor of Makhdum Akhi Serājaddīn, all three famous holy men of the district. His son Ghiyāsaddīn, who succeeded him, was the patron of Hazrat Nur Kutb Alam, whose foundation still exists at Pandua and with

whom he is said to have studied theology at Rājnagar in Birbhum. It is recorded of Ghiyāsaddīn that one day, whilst shooting arrows for recreation, he killed a widow's son accidentally. The widow complained to the Kazi at Pandua and the king was summoned and ordered to pay compensation. The king complied with the order and told the Kazi that if there had been any hesitation in making it on account of the rank of the accused, he, the king, would have cut him to pieces with his sword. The Kazi retorted that if the king had not complied with the order, he would have had him flogged in the usual way in default. Ghiyāsaddīn was a patron of the arts and sent an embassy to invite the Persian poet Hafiz to his court at Pandua. His death was followed by a few years of civil war till Raja Ganesh, a Hindu zamindar of Dinājpur, established himself (1404 *circa*) as king in Pandua with the help of the saint Nur Kutb Alam. Raja Ganesh was greeted at Pandua as the restorer of Hindu rule in Bengal, and according to Mahomedan annalists persecuted the people of their faith and murdered a number of the leading men of the community. His oppressions led Nur Kutb Alam to invite the Sultan of Jaunpur to interfere. The Sultan invaded Bengal and put the Raja in such peril that he begged Nur Kutb Alam to order the Sultan to withdraw, promising to let his youthful son Jadu be converted to Islamism. The saint agreed, converted the boy and made the Sultan of Jaunpur withdraw. The Raja thereupon sought to put Jadu back into caste by having him passed through a cow made of gold, the material of which was divided amongst the Brahmins who conducted the ceremony. The boy, being converted by such a learned saint as Nur Kutb Alam, did not apostatise and succeeded his father in 1414 as a Mahomedan king of Bengal under the name of Jalāladdīn.

Jalāladdīn himself lived in Gaur, though he spent large sums of money in embellishing Pandua which, according to the annalists, flourished in his reign beyond description. His tomb with that of his wife and son is at Pandua, in the Eklākhi Mausoleum. The spread of Mahomedanism amongst the peoples of Eastern Bengal is ascribed to his oppressive measures to that end. He was succeeded by his son Ahmed Shah, who sent an embassy to the Tartar Emperor Shah Rukh at Herat to solicit protection against the Sultan of Jaunpur. This request was acknowledged by the despatch of Mulana Abdul Rahim as ambassador to the Court of Gaur, and an order to Jaunpur to cease his aggression. Ahmed was assassinated as the result of a court conspiracy against him caused by his cruelties and the

family of Hāji Ilyās re-established itself on the throne in the person of Nāsiraddīn, in whose reign (1454 *circa*) the Kotwali gate in Gaur was built. His son Bārbak Shāh introduced Abyssinian slaves into his army and formed of them a corps of Janissaries. Bārbak seems to have been a strong ruler and Gaur had prosperity till his death in 1478. After him, however, there was a period of frequent change of rulers, due to the intrigues of the Abyssinian guards, which ended finally in the accession of an Abyssinian army chief, Fīrōz Shāh, who reigned for 13 years till 1470. He built the Fīrōz *minār* in Gaur and several mosques. The *minār* is supposed to have been erected to commemorate the victories of Fīrōz Shāh. As regards its building the story runs that the king's builder boasted to him that he could have made the *minār* higher if he had the material. He had not in fact asked for more material. The king promptly had the builder thrown from the top of the *minār* and turning angrily to a servant told him to go to Margaon. The servant proceeded to obey and on the way consulted a person whom he met as to what he was to do at Margaon. This person, after hearing what had occurred, suggested that the king wanted masons from Margaon, where the best masons lived. The servant acted on the surmise, which proved correct. The expression "going to Margaon" has become proverbial to describe a person with a hazy idea of what he has to do.

After the death of Fīrōz there was a further period of usurpation of the throne by intriguers with the royal guards till Hossain Shāh established himself in 1494. At the beginning of his reign the troops sacked Gaur as a reward for their assistance to the king, but shortly after this the king found means to disband these guards. A section of them known as Paiks were settled in Midnapore, and their descendants gave trouble there to the English at the end of the 18th century. Hossain Shāh ruled for 27 years and completely restored the fortunes of Gaur, so much so that Gaur became a synonym for Bengal and Gauriya for its inhabitants. The increase of wealth in Gaur is said to have made the use of gold and silver vessels on festive occasions quite common.

It was in the reign of Hossain Shāh in the year 1509 that the famous religious reformer Chaitanya Deb became a *sunyasi* and founded the *bairagi* cult. This religious movement, which after Kulinism has most profoundly determined the distinctive Hinduism of Bengal, found two prominent adherents in Gaur in the highly placed officers, the brothers Rup and

Sanatan, who left their homes and positions to follow Chaitanya to Brindaban. Chaitanya himself visited Ramkel near Gaur, where Rup and Sanatan lived. The well-known *bairagi mela* at Ramkel perpetuates their memory. Another great disciple of Chaitanya was Nityananda, from whom derives the local Goswami family of Gayeshpur.

The story of Haridas, one of Chaitanya's followers, is that he was sent before the Kazi-ul-kazi of Gaur to be tried for the crime of being converted from Mahomedanism to the new doctrine. He was sentenced to be scourged through each of the 22 bazars of Gaur and his dead body thrown into the river. The executioners, for whom he prayed before losing consciousness, threw his body into the Ganges after carrying out the first part of the sentence and were so astonished to find that he was thrown up on the bank still alive that they allowed him to go free.

Hossain Shāh built the Dakhil gate of the fort in Gaur, and the tomb of Akhi Serajaddin at Sādullāpur. He also endowed the tomb of the saint Hazrat Nur Kutb Alam at Pandua with a large amount of land—the Bais-hazari endowment—which still survives. Literature was represented in his reign by, amongst others, the Bengali poet Chandi Das. He waged successful war against what is now Cooch Behar and also against Orissa, but his attempts to extend his power in Bihar were checked by Sikandar Lodi.

He was succeeded by his son Nasrat Shāh who married the daughter of the Afghan Emperor of Delhi and gave shelter to the chiefs of that dynasty after it had been overthrown at Panipat (1526) by the Moghuls under Babar. This drew upon him the hostility of the Moghuls, who advanced against him twice, but on each occasion invasion was averted by Nasrat's submission and payment of tribute. During his reign the Baradarwāzi mosque and the Kadam Rasul were built in Gaur. Nasrat was assassinated in 1532 A. D., a fate which shortly after befell his son and successor at the hands of his uncle Mahmud Shāh III. In 1537 A. D. the Pathan adventurer, Sher Khan, later the Emperor Sher Shāh, who had established himself in Bihar, advanced against Gaur, which he took and sacked. In the history of Faria da Souza it is related that Mahmud applied to the Portuguese for assistance against Sher Khan, but that the squadron of nine ships sent to his aid did not arrive in Bengal till after the surrender of the city. It is said that at the time of the siege of Gaur there were Portuguese prisoners from Chittagong in Gaur. The historian

goes on to describe Gaur from hearsay as "the principal city of Bengal seated on the banks of the Ganges, three leagues in length, containing one million and two hundred thousand families and well fortified. Along the streets, which are wide and straight, are rows of trees to shade the people, who are so very numerous that sometimes many are trod to death."

Mahmud also applied for assistance to the Emperor Humayun, who invaded Bengal and retook Gaur shortly after Mahmud's death. Mahmud was buried at Sădullāpur and with him died the last independent king of Bengal.

From this time may be dated the beginning of the decline of Gaur: it lost its strategic importance as the power of Delhi extended eastward, whilst at the same time a period of development of trade and commerce in Bengal was commencing with the coming of the Portuguese and other traders from the west. This trade gradually introduced a good deal of wealth in the form of specie into Lower Bengal, and the province from being in the eyes of Delhi poor and unprofitable gradually became a steady source of considerable revenue which repaid attention. As that wealth was coming into Lower Bengal it was inevitable that that portion of the province should so increase in importance as to necessitate the transfer of the local government to it.

Humayun remained for some three months in Gaur enjoying its amenities. He renamed it Jannatābād (the city of Heaven) as he disliked the word Gaur, which resembled in sound the Hindūstani word for a grave. In the meantime Sher Khan had retreated to the south on Humayun's advance and, taking advantage of the latter's inactivity, worked back to Bihar through Chota Nagpur and barred Humayun's communication with Delhi. Humayun was forced to fight and sustained a severe defeat, which enabled Sher Khan to recapture Gaur and make good his rule over Bihar and Bengal. Later, in 1540, Sher Khan again defeated Humayun and made himself Emperor. He appointed Khizir Khan as his Governor in Gaur and on the attempt of Khizir Khan to make himself independent, Sher Khan defeated him and divided Bengal into several provinces to which he appointed his Lieutenants. In the re-organisation of the provinces, Sher Shāh introduced the fiscal division of the *parganā* into Bengal: that in which Gaur lies bears the name Shershābād. The revenue was assessed at one quarter of the gross produce. Another reform was the introduction of a system of posts between Sonargaon and Delhi, horses being used to convey the royal mails.

Of the many stories locally current about Sher Shāh and his justice whilst King of Bengal, one is that his son was riding through Gaur on an elephant and made an insulting gesture to the wife of a local inhabitant whom he happened to see from the howdah in the inner courtyard of her house. The husband complained to the king who ordered that his son's wife should be publicly subjected to the same indignity from the hands of the complainant. The king finally yielded to the protests of his courtiers that two blacks would not make a white and made his son humbly sue for pardon.

After Sher Shāh's death in 1545 Mahomed Khan, who had been appointed Governor of Bengal by the new Emperor, proclaimed his independence and invaded Jaunpur, but was defeated and killed by the Emperor's general Himu. His son Bahadur Shāh, however, established himself at Gaur and died there. In the two years succeeding his death there were three kings of Gaur, the last of whom was assassinated by Taj Khan Kerani, brother of Sulaiman Kerani of Bihar. On the death of Taj Khan, Sulaiman seized Gaur in 1563. He removed the capital to Tanra or Tanda on account of the unhealthiness of Gaur itself. This name is borne still by a piece of land in the vicinity of Lakhipur on the road from Gaur to Rājmahāl. All traces of the town have been lost in the changes of the Ganges, but it is supposed to have been situated to the south-west of Gaur on one of the *chars* formed by the Ganges. The chief event in the reign of Sulaiman was the war with Raja Mukunda Deb of Orissa whom he defeated by means of his general Kalapahar, a Brahmin convert to Islamism. Sulaiman died in 1573 and was succeeded by his son Dawad Khan, who entered into hostilities with the Emperor Akbar.

Akbar's general Munaim Khan drove him out of Tanra into Orissa, and being impressed by the splendours of Gaur made his headquarters at that place. A pestilence broke out in which thousands died, including Munaim Khan, in 1573. Gaur became depopulated and practically deserted as a result of this pestilence which is generally believed to have been some form of malaria, probably due to the recession of the main stream of the Ganges from the city front. A Mahomedan historian writes: 'Thousands died daily; the living were wearied with burying the dead. Corpses of Hindus and Mahomedans were thrown into the swamps, the tanks and into the Bhāgirathi. This created a stench which only intensified the disease. The few people that survived the plague left the city, which was never again populated to any extent. At the time of its

destruction it was the most magnificent city in India, of immense extent and filled with noble buildings. It was the capital of a hundred kings, the seat of wealth and luxury; it had existed 2,000 years. In one year it was humbled to the dust and now is the abode of monkeys and leopards.'

Dr. Buchanan Hamilton states, however, that the later Moghul Viceroys of Bengal used occasionally to reside at the fortified palace of Gaur while Tanra continued to be their headquarters. The loss of population and complete decline of Gaur appears from a passage in Hakluyt's Principal Navigations Voyages in which Ralph Fitch mentions that they passed the 'country of Gauren where we found but few villages; but almost all wilderness and saw many buffs, swine and deers grass longer than a man and very many tigers.'

Owing to the death of Munaim Khan and the depletion of his forces, the Moghuls withdr.w for a short time from Bengal. This gave Dawad and his Pathan chiefs an opportunity to re-establish themselves in the district, but they were quickly overcome and Dawad killed in 1576. The Subadars of Bengal continued till the time of Raja Man Singh (1589) to have their headquarters at Tanra and from that place occupied themselves in putting down the recalcitrant Pathans of Bengal. The place was disliked by them on account of its unhealthiness, and at the same time the fact that most of their fighting had to be done on the fringes of Bengal to the east and south, where the Pathans had retired to East Bengal and Orissa, tended to make the district an inconvenient base for military operations. Raja Man Singh accordingly made his headquarters at Rājmahāl on the opposite side of the Ganges, and from there operated in Bengal, but in 1608 Islan Khan, the then Subadar, removed the headquarters to Dacca, which place became the administrative capital of Bengal Province.

Tanra appears again in history as the place in which the Governor Shāh Shujā, retreating before the forces of his brother, the Emperor Aurangzeb, spent the rains of 1660. It is recorded of Shāh Shujā that he contemplated restoring Gaur and its palace, but his plans, whatever they were, came to nothing with his defeat.

At the end of the 17th century Gaur had become, like Pandua, a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts, and the district an obscure portion of the Province.

The East India Company early established a trade connection with the district, having its factory at Old Mālda where also was a Dutch factory, of which there are still remains.

From Bruce's Annals of the Honourable East India Company it appears that in 1681 the Bengal agents were ordered to send equal proportions of stock to Dacca and Old Mālda. In 1686 the factory was seized by Nawab Saista Khan, Subadar of Bengal, and the Company ordered its agents to demand one and a half lakhs of rupees as compensation for the demolition and plundering of the factory. The records of 1748 embody a complaint from the merchant *gumastas* of the Company at Mālda that they were ill-treated by the people of the Nawab. It may be mentioned that the district had a connection with the downfall of the subadars, as after the battle of Plassey in 1757 the Nawab Suraj-ud-doulah fled across the Ganges and took refuge in a place in what is now the Sibganj thānā, from which he was betrayed.

After the dewani or fiscal administration of Bengal had been granted to the Company, a fortified commercial residency was built in 1771 at English Bāzār by Mr. George Henchman. This building is now used as the District Collectorate.

By the end of the 18th century there were a number of European indigo planters in the district, besides the commercial resident and his assistants. Amongst the planters may be mentioned Mr. Creighton of Goamalti, from whose drawings the ruins of Gaur have in recent years been restored. The first systematic exploration of the site of Gaur was made by Mr. Creighton in 1801. Mr. Grant was at that time the factor of the Company at English Bāzār. Letters of an indigo planter, Mr. Andrew Brown, living at English Bāzār at the beginning of the 19th century, have recently been published; we read of the mild excitement in the town at an expected visit from Lord Wellesley when on his way to Calcutta and of the disappointment caused by his journeying through Rājmahāl. Mention is made of the *mali* being soundly beaten at Old Mālda in sectarain riots between Mahomedans and Hindus, for which apparently that place was notorious.

In 1810 Dr. Buchanan Hamilton visited the district and wrote an account of the ruins of Gaur and Pandua, so far as they were accessible.

Up till 1813 the district formed part of the Purnea and Dinājpur districts, the Mahānandā being the boundary, but in that year, in consequence of the prevalence of serious crime in the Kāliāchak and Sibganj thānās and on the rivers, a Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector was appointed at English Bāzār with jurisdiction over a number of police-stations centring on that place and taken from the two districts. In 1832 a separate

treasury was opened, the following year being that of the discontinuance of the Company's trade. In 1859 a full Magistrate and Collector was appointed. Amongst holders of that office may be mentioned Mr. Ravenshaw, after whom the College in Cuttack is named. His illustrated description of Gaur and Pandua was published in 1878.

The district was unaffected by the Sonthal rising and by the Mutiny.

Recent years have seen the total disappearance of the indigo industry and of the filature factories, the clearance of the jungles of the *bārind*, Gaur and Pandua by Sonthals and Paharias, who have crossed the Ganges and settled in the district. Lately there has been a movement of immigration on the part of the Shershābādi Mahomedans, so called from the parganā of Shershābād where they are found in large numbers, into the *duba* and *tāl* lands of the district; this movement has been facilitated by the construction of the railway.

During the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon some of the ruins of Gaur and Pandua were restored, the Viceroy himself visiting the district in connection with the enterprise.

In 1905 the district was transferred from the Bhāgalpur division to the Rājshāhī division on the formation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. It was formerly a part of the Rājshāhī division, but was transferred from that division to Bhāgalpur in 1876. The district is from 1912 in the Rājshāhī division of Bengal.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

THE first census of the district was taken in 1872, when the population of the present district area was 677,328 or a density of 357 persons per square mile.

Between 1872 and 1881 there was an increase of 5 per cent., but an actual decrease in the southern portion of the district west of the Mahānandā; the decrease was attributed to malaria during the latter half of the decade.

Between 1881 and 1891 there was an increase of 14·5 per cent. due mainly to the opening out of the *bārind* by the Sonthals and increase of population in the south of the district.

At the census of 1901 the population was found to be 884,030, or an increase of 8·5 per cent., half of which was due to immigration from the Sonthal Parganās. The decade was on the whole unhealthy from malaria and cholera, but there was a considerable increase of population in the south-western thānās, fed partly by immigration from English Bāzār thānā and from Murshidābād.

The decade from 1901 was on the whole healthy except for the prevalence of fever during the years 1905, 1906 and 1907. This was connected with the high prices ruling in those years and the comparatively poor outturn of *bhādoi* and *rabi* crops, failure of the mango crops and heavy floods in 1906.

The figures of the 1911 census show a population of 1,004,159, or an increase of 13·5 per cent.: immigration has been constant from the Sonthal Parganās and there has been a considerable increase of population in the *diāra* tracts, especially amongst the Mahomedans known as Shershābādis. The Ganges has also receded to the west with the result that large numbers of cultivators from Murshidābād have followed their *chars* into the district.

The density of the population according to the census of 1911 is 529 per square mile, being greatest in the *diāra* thānās. The greatest increases are shown by the Gājol and Old Mālda police-station and Habibpur outpost, where Sonthals have settled in thousands and where population is being attracted by the new line of railway.

Emigration.

There is practically no emigration from the district except into the neighbouring districts. If we leave out the women who marry across the border, the emigration is mainly attributable to the constant changes of jurisdiction caused by variation in the course of the Ganges and to the settlement of the surplus *diāra* population in the vacant *chars* of Purnea west of Ratuā and in the *dūbās* of the Tāngan and Pūrnabhābā in Dinājpur.

Immigration.

Immigration has been on a large scale for the last three decades, chiefly from the Sonthal Parganās, into the high lands of the *bārind* and to some extent of Biharis, who have come for service and settled down to cultivation very largely in the west of Ratuā and Tulsīhātā, though they are to be found in every thānā.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

The population is mainly rural, being chiefly engaged in agriculture, but the villages vary considerably in size. This is due to the nature of the country west of the Mahānandā. Sites above flood level are comparatively limited, with the result that one village runs into another. Where in addition there is a considerable population of weavers or silk reelers, the village becomes a small town, of which Bholāhāt, Mahādipur, Sibganj, Kaligaon may be cited as examples. In the *bārind*, where the ground is high and agriculture is the sole occupation, the tendency is for the people to remain in small hamlets. About 4 per cent. of the total population is resident in the Municipalities of English Bāzār, Nawābganj and Old Mālda, the remainder being spread over 4,683 villages. The population of Nawābganj town is 23,322, of English Bāzār 14,322 and of Old Mālda 3,750.

SEXES.

The proportion of sexes is 1,000 males to 1,020 females : the figures for the east and west of the Mahānandā being, respectively, 973 and 1,042 females for 1,000 males. East of the Mahānandā the population is largely of Koch origin, and amongst these castes a deficiency of women is a well-marked phenomenon.

LANGUAGE.

The language of the courts is Bengali, but large numbers of the population (21 per cent.) in the west and north of the district of Bihari origin speak Hindi or a mixture of Hindi and Bengali known as *Khurtta*. Amongst the peoples of Koch affinities the dialect is that of North Bengal. The Sonthals largely retain their own language but are gradually acquiring Bengali. The character in common use and taught in the schools is Bengali : Kaithi is also common.

ETHNOLOGY.

Sir William Hunter remarks that Mālda presents ethnologically the aspect of a border district. The population is

almost evenly divided into Hindus and Mahomedans: the Sonthals, however, constitute about 6 per cent., of which only one-third are returned as Animist by religion.

The proportion of Hindus is greatest in the north and west of the district and of Mahomedans in the south. The Hindus fall into three main divisions: the Bihari castes mostly resident in the *diāra* tracts whose language is Hindi: the castes with affinities in the Koch such as the Rajbanshi, Poli and Deshi found in the north-east and north of the district, and lastly the ordinary castes of Lower Bengal strongest round Gaur and to the south. It will be seen that the distribution of population by religion corresponds with the political history of the district.

Amongst the Mahomedans the differences of nationality are not so well defined, but their affinities are for the most part with the castes of lower Bengal, though it is said that the Mahomedans of the Shershābād parganā of Sibganj police-station, known as Shershābādis, show traces of descent from the foreign immigration of the time of the Mahomedan dynasties. It would appear, however, that the physical advantages which these people enjoy can be partly ascribed to the healthiness of the climate of the Gangetic *chars*. With the exception of a few high class families of Saiyids, Moghuls and Pathans all the Mahomedans are Sheikhs. Amongst the cultivators, however, the Shershābādis form a distinct group: there is also a small endogamous body known as the Darbhanga Sheikhs, colonists from the district of Darbhanga. Of the functional groups may be mentioned the Jholahas (weavers), Dhaniyas (carders), Naluas (reed sellers), Nikaris (fishermen) and Kunjras (vegetable sellers). As illustrating the tendency for Mahomedans to form castes mention may be made of Pir-kō-dālis, the name applied to Beldars professing Mahomedanism.

The higher castes of Bengal are represented to a very limited extent. Of the lower castes in position and influence the Shāhās and Baniks, particularly of Old Mālda, are prominent. It appears that a number of them were returned in the census as Agarwālas. Castes peculiar to the district are Chāsatis and Puros, agriculturists and silk-worm rearers, respectively. Castes mainly found in this district are Ganesh and Gangai, weavers and potters, though also agriculturists. Hindus.

Most of the Bihari castes permit widow remarriage, as do also the castes of Koch origin, so that the majority of the Hindu inhabitants do not differ in this respect from their Mahomedan neighbours.

Of the numerically more important Hindu castes the chief is that comprised by the Koch Rajbansis, Polis and Deshis, who number 63,735. In appearance they are strongly Mongoloid like the Koches, though they deny a common origin. Sir William Hunter says that they lived chiefly by hunting and were averse to leaving their villages or mixing with other people. They now depend entirely on agriculture and are on the whole a prosperous community, which is reflected by the claims that a section of the Polis now make to be Kshattriya by origin. This sub-caste goes by the name of Sadhu as distinguished from the 'Bābu' or ordinary Poli. Its members conform to Hindu custom in respect of forbidding widow remarriage, the avoidance of forbidden food, and restraining their women-folk from attending markets to buy and sell. This movement has made little headway with the Deshis and the Koch Rajbansis, and a feature of the markets and fairs of the eastern part of the district is the number of women who frequent them, wearing their distinctive dress known as the *fōtā*, a cloth the upper part of which is tied tightly round the body under the armpits leaving the neck and arms bare.

The Chains, who number 43,639, are a caste with Bihari affinities found in large numbers in the *diāra* thānās of the west of the district. They are agriculturists and labourers and practise widow remarriage. They are divided into two sub-castes, Bara and Chhota, which do not intermarry.

The Sonthals in the district number 52,128. Though returned largely as Hindus, they differ in no respect from the people of the Sonthal Parganās, with whom they are constantly in contact. The majority of them are unable to speak Bengali.

The Christians number 430, nearly all of them Baptists, mostly Sonthal converts. The Mission is of interest, as it was Mr. Grant, the factor of the English Bāzār factory, who brought Dr. Thomas to the district, and through him, William Carey, who settled as an indigo planter on the Tāngan just beyond the present border of the district.

All the Mahomedans are Sunnis, and, with the exception of numbers of the Shershābādis, of the Hānifi persuasion. The prevailing doctrine amongst the Shershābādis is that known as Farāzi, though different groups are known by such names as Lāmazhābis, Wāhābis, Hadayat. The common feature of these schisms is that they profess to base themselves on the text of the Koran and do not adhere to any of the regular schools of doctrine into which the Mahomedan religious world is divided. In practice the adherents of these doctrines object to

taking service and to allowing any marriageable woman to remain unmarried, in addition to acknowledging the ordinary prohibitions amongst Mahomedans in respect of drinking, smoking and usury. In 1869 several prosecutions for waging war against the Queen were instituted against Wāhābis. Of late years, however, it is in such matters as objection to vaccination, which operation some of them characterize as an acknowledgment of the goddess Basanta, that they have come in conflict with the administration.

Apart from the regular Mahomedan festivals such as the Maharam, the Id-ul-Fitr, Id-uz-Zoha and lesser celebrations, the chief local religious festival is that of the Hazrat Pandua *mēlas* or fairs, instituted in connection with the Bāishazāri and Sāshazāri endowments. These *mēlas* are in honour of the saints Makdum Shāh Jalal and Kutub Shāh. The Bāishazāri *mēla* is held from the 17th to 22nd of Rajeb and the chief Sāshazāri *mēla* from the 8th to the 14th of Shaban, the last day coinciding with the festival of the Sab-i-barat. Regulated as all strictly Mahomedan ceremonies are by the lunar year, the dates according to the calendar year fall earlier on each succeeding occasion. The ceremonies consist of the offering of *fātihas*, or prayers for the dead, combined with the distribution of alms and food to the *fakīrs* who assemble on the occasion. Similar ceremonies are performed at the Powal *mēla* at Bāmangolā in March. The Farāzi sects are distinguished in this respect from other Mahomedans in that they repudiate as idolatrous such gatherings in honour of departed saints, stigmatising those who assist at them as Bedātis.

Popular religion, Mahomedanism.

Reference may be made to the Census Report of Bengal for a detailed account of the *pirs* (holy men) who are commonly adored in Bengal. The outward forms of this adoration most commonly seen in Mālda are the small bamboo boats with sails set afloat in the rivers in honour of Khwāja Khijr; the five mounds of earth in honour of the Pānch Pīr: the strips of cloth tied in honour of Tena Pīr, on trees at the halting places in the *bārind*, by the carters bringing rice from Dinājpur: the models of horses in honour of the Ghorapir to be seen on the roadside by the tombs of departed saints. References to local *pirs* will be found in the succeeding chapters.

HINDU RELIGION.

Most of the Bengali-speaking Hindu inhabitants profess Baisnabi doctrines and there are numerous Bengali Gosains living at Goyeshbari who have numbers of followers amongst the Poli and North Bengal castes. With the worship of Radha and Krishna is, however, mingled that of Kali. Amongst the

higher castes the Sakti doctrine with the worship of Durga as in Lower Bengal is commonly found. The Hindi-speaking castes can be described as Saivas, but no hard and fast points of difference can be laid down to differentiate them from their immediate neighbours.

Apart from the ordinary Hindu festivals common to Bengal there is a great gathering of *bairāgis* from Mālda and surrounding districts for the Ramkeli *mēla* held in the ruins of Gaur near the Sona Masjid at the end of Jyestha (middle of June). The chief ceremonies are bathing in the tank of Sonātan and worship of Krishna. Advantage is taken of this occasion by *bairāgis* to get married in accordance with the rites prescribed by Chaitanya, and a fee is paid for the marriage to the Gosain, who lives near the tank of Sonātan; this has given rise to the popular saying that the *bairāgi* buys his wife at the Ramkeli *mēla* for Re. 1-4. Most of the *bairāgis* on their way to the *mēla* assemble at Sibganj Tārtipur, where they bathe in the Ganges and worship the god Syam Sarbeswar.

At Jangaltola on the left bank of the Bhāgīrathī and some 7 miles south-west of English Bāzār is a colony of Brahmins, known as Thakuranjis, who observe celibacy. They consider themselves to be *gōpinis* or milkmaids and worship, dressed in women's clothes, Krishna as their incarnate lover. The chief puja is on the last day of Baisakh and is known as the Tulsi Bihar *mēla* at which large numbers of their followers assemble.

By far the most popular festival, however, in this district is that of the Gumbhira. It is celebrated everywhere during the last three days of the Bengal year, the end of Chait, though it is usually carried over into Baisakh and even later. The following is taken from the Census Report. 'The Koches and their congeners worship the Gramya Devata (village godlings) at a curious ceremony called *Gumbhira*, when the young people of the village disguise themselves, personating the deities and dance.' In this district, however, the ceremony is universal amongst low caste Hindus; it is said that it is a form of the Ban Puja introduced by King Ban, whose capital was at Dinājpur. The king was a great worshipper of Siva and used to review at this ceremony the acts done during the year which was passing. The ceremony consisted originally in the annual review of the acts of the year and penance for misdeeds. As now celebrated in this district, a *shamiana* or a hut open on three sides is put up and an image of Siva (Mahadeb) installed, before which there is dancing, singing, masquerading and general merriment. It is customary to versify the past year's

events. The following is a verse of the topical song of April 1908 as sung in the *diāra* :—

১। বলব কি গান ওহে শিব বাগানে নাই আম।
গাছে গাছে বেড়িয়া দেখছি নূতন পাতা সব সমান॥
মনে মনে ভাবছি বসে, কাজের কোন পায়না দিশা।
তেল ধান চাউলের দর খুব কশা ভুষার বেশী দাম॥
আর এক শুন নূতন কাহিনী, ঠিক দুপ্রহরের শিল আর পানি।
মাঠে হয় কৃষাণ পেরসানী মারিলে গহম॥

"O Siva what song shall we sing to thee—there are no mangoes in the gardens—as we go from tree to tree nothing but new leaves are seen—our sole thought as we sit is what shall we do—oil, paddy and rice are very dear and also bran : listen again, just at mid-day come hail and rain to harass the farmer and destroy the wheat."

The allusion is to a severe hailstorm which occurred at the beginning of April that year.

Animism.

The Sonthals and Mal Paharis, though largely returned as Hindus, practically retain their tribal religious observances and customs, as they are in continuous touch with their brethren across the river, large numbers of whom come annually for the rice planting and cutting seasons, in addition to those who come to make their homes in the district.

Social system.

The system of social government is the same for Hindus, Mahomedans and Sonthals and appears to be independent of caste. Each village has its headman known as *mandal*, *pramanik* or *mahat* for every separate caste group in it, provided there are more than a few families. It is usual to find in the larger villages that the place of residence of the members of each group is called after the *mandal's* name as so and so's *tola* or *para*. The *mandal* is not ordinarily elected but generally holds the post by descent; he is frequently the money-lender of the community and generally the wealthiest man. So far as perquisites of office go, these are confined chiefly to *pān supāri* on festive occasions, to double allowances at wedding feasts, and he is also a sort of general adviser. Breaches of caste discipline, or morality, petty civil disputes and quarrels are adjudicated on by assemblies of the neighbouring *mandals* constituting a panchayat. These assemblies are known as *tisi*, *bāishi* or *chautishi*, the *bāishi* being the most common. The words mean 3, 22 and 36, respectively, and

it is said that formerly the panchayat consisted of *mandals* of that number of villages. However that may be, it appears that the term *bāishi* is even occasionally applied to designate a single prominent *mandal*. The panchayat assembles at the house of the senior *mandal* and the parties are sent for, and, if the offence be not admitted, are heard and a decision is given. For petty offences the punishment is usually a fine, which amongst some castes is spent on drinking and general feasting and with others devoted to religious purposes, such as the upkeep of a mosque. Payment is enforced by outcasting, which means that no one can marry into the offender's family without incurring the same penalty or smoke or sit with him or visit his house. Amongst the Hindus in cases of caste discipline, the panchayat does not usually seek, or act on, the advise of the Brahmins who minister to the castes.

Amongst the higher castes and classes of the population this elaborate system of caste control does not exist, and even amongst the general mass of the population it is being sapped through the spread of education and diffusion of wealth, and to some extent the influence of the *zamindari* system, but on the other hand the post of *mandal* is much coveted, as it is possible for a man of wealth to get a place amongst them.

The system must be distinguished from the panchayati system of the Chaukidari Act, by which a group of villages is formed into a union and the leading persons constituted into a panchayat responsible for assessment, collection and disbursement of the chaukidari tax and for reporting crime, etc., under the Criminal Procedure Code.

It is also distinct from the village government by the headman, by which the internal economy of the village is regulated in matters of intercaste dealings, although the same individual may act in various capacities.

The ordinary village house consists of a number of single storied huts of bamboo built on raised plinths of earth round an open yard: in the towns there are a number of brick buildings. The use of corrugated iron has not spread much, mainly owing to the extreme heat in the hot weather, in spite of the fact that at this season of the year, when the dry west winds blow, there are normally extensive fires, whole villages being regularly burnt down. In the *bārind* tracts houses are usually built with thick mud walls and thatched roofs, the ceiling being of bamboos with mud laid on them. The outer wall is carried from one hut to the other so as to enclose all the

huts opening into a yard inside. Building is usually done by the cultivators themselves.

Dress. Mention has been made of the peculiar dress worn by the women of the Koch classes. The rest of the people wear the *dhōti* and *sāri* of Lower Bengal, generally of cotton : coats, vests, shoes, and umbrellas are in common use. Ornaments of gold and silver are commonly worn as well as the cheaper ornaments of glass and inferior metals.

Arts. Various forms of drums, wind and string instruments are used by the *Nats* who supply music at religious festivals and weddings. In the towns there are amateur theatrical associations.

Domestic life. The life of the ordinary villager is very simple, the ordinary work in the fields being diversified by journeys to buy silk-worm seed, to cut and buy winter rice and to attend the bigger fairs in addition to the round of local markets and village festivities. The absence of any considerable number of high caste people of the middle classes in the villages has militated against interest being aroused in the outside world. To this day, for example, it is common to hear the district of Murshidabad called by its old name of Mūkshusābad. At the same time, in spite of the absorption in village affairs, the ordinary village factions over social and religious matters do not obtrude themselves to any great extent.

Of recent years the good prices ruling for agricultural produce have introduced more money into the villages, and there has been increased interest in movements for the improvement of caste and for better education, mostly confined, however, to the Bengali-speaking population, the Hindi-speaking portion of the inhabitants being apparently satisfied with their improved material position. This is not surprising, in view of the low status in society of the majority of these latter people, *e.g.*, Binds, Chains and Tiyars.

The towns are differentiated from the villages by the presence in them of a comparatively large foreign population of professional men and educated men in Government and other employment attracted by business, and in the case of English Bāzār and Nawābganj also by the courts. This element is on the whole progressive and contributes largely to the working of local and municipal administration and to increasing the amenities of town life. An instance of this activity is the small agricultural and industrial exhibition founded in 1901 and held almost annually since then at English Bāzār. The other side of the picture in the comparison between rural and

village life is the gambling, drinking, and looseness of morals characteristic of town life.

With the exception of the Wāhābi movement, in the course of which some men were prosecuted in 1866 for waging war against the Queen, no political movement appears to have affected the district during British rule till the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905. This was strongest amongst the educated sections of the urban areas, but made its appeal on the protectionist side to the producers of cotton cloths and silks. The greatly increased circulation of vernacular newspapers characteristic of the agitation had little effect amongst the masses in fomenting sedition and anti-Government feelings, but served to quicken interest in secular education and to stir up the secular antipathy between Hindu and Mahomedan. The increased interest in education was particularly noticeable amongst the Mahomedans.

There are no prominent old families whose representatives live in the district, and large quantities of land belong to families resident in other districts. Of local residents the Brahmin family of Chānchāl, whose ancestors acquired land in the north of the district, is the most important. The present representative of the family, Raja Sarat Chandra Roy, who received the title of Raja in 1911, resides at Chānchāl and is well known for his liberal support of medical and educational institutions for the benefit of his tenantry. Babu Krishna Lal Choudhuri is the present head of the Tilhi banking and landholding family of English Bāzār, whose fortunes date from their business relations with the Hon'ble East India Company.

The Gir Gosain of Gosainhat is a zamindar held in considerable respect as an up-country Brahmin and head of an old religious foundation.

Of all the indigo planters who held large quantities of land in the district up to the latter part of last century the sole surviving representative is Mr. George Hennessy, the zamindar of Mathurapur. Amongst the Mahomedans the Miya family of Jot is a well known old Mahomedan family of the district, once large landholders. The heads of the Bāishazāri and Sāshazāri endowments belong to the district of Burdwan and are non-resident landlords.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

VITAL STATISTICS

THE vital statistics collected through the agency of the village chaukidars are, at any rate up to the recent years, of little value except as showing the relative healthiness and unhealthiness of different years and the relative incidence of common diseases. The returns for towns are more accurate, but the towns are themselves small and contain a number of men who do not bring their families with them. Consequently their statistics afford no accurate indication of the real birth and death rates of the district.

In 1892 the system of reporting by chaukidars of both births and deaths was re-introduced. For the ten years 1892—1901 the average annual rates per mille for the whole district were for births 38·3 and for deaths 33·69. For the ten years 1901—1911 the corresponding figures are births 46·98 per mille and deaths 36·33. Allowing for the increase of population shown by the census of 1911 it would appear that the percentages for the two periods show no great variations. During the period from 1892 to 1911, years in which the recorded number of deaths exceeded those of births are 1894, 1899, 1900, 1907, years in which epidemic malaria prevailed. Between the census of 1901 and that of 1911 the excess of births over deaths was 57,000 or about half the recorded increase of population; allowing for immigration these figures are probably fairly correct.

According to the annual returns, the greatest mortality is due to fever, cholera and small-pox. The usual sequence of these diseases during the year is, cholera during the hot weather in the mango season and towards the end of the rains at the time of the *bhādoi* paddy coming into common consumption: fever at the close of the rains and beginning of the cold weather, followed by small-pox which continues occasionally into the rains. Of the three, malarial fever is by far the most important, but as small-pox, cholera and fever are generally the only three diseases which the village chaukidar can distinguish, every death not due to small-pox or cholera is

ascribed to fever; it is not possible to say accurately how much of the mortality is due to malarial fever proper. The district shares with Purnea, Dinājpur and Rājshāhi the reputation of being very unhealthy from this cause, and it is safe to say that beside the considerable mortality from malaria in normal years, any increase in the death rate due to fever may be set down to malaria alone. The type of fever common is thus described by the Civil Surgeon :—

"The ordinary type is the tertian form. Quotidian is not rare but the quartan type is seldom seen. Sometimes the fever assumes a remittent form, which occasionally ends fatally. The temperature in some cases remains persistently high, and in some cases there is irregular rise and fall. The temperature is generally highest in the evening. The spleen becomes enormously enlarged after repeated attacks of malarial fever of the intermittent type. The remittent type lasts from a week in mild cases to several weeks in severe cases, and the spleen becomes enlarged, though not so much as in the case of repeated attacks of fever of the intermittent form." The prevalence of malarial fever is not by any means a recent phenomenon in the history of the district. Hamilton ascribes the depopulation of Gaur to malaria. Ralph Fitch, writing in 1556, mentions that 'the muscatoes of Gouren were very big.' At the end of the 18th century Dr. Thomas speaks of the fevers prevalent at Goamalti near Gaur, in which place he was residing, and the thānās of English Bāzār and Sibganj bordering Gaur have still a heavy death rate from malarial fever, which occasionally assumes an epidemic form. The most unhealthy part of the district from this cause is, however, the *bārind*, though the comparative sparseness of the population has tended to obscure the facts.

The deaths per mille from fevers for the years 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1911 were 32·30, 34·64, 34·47, 34·77 and 32·30, respectively. The figures for 1911 show a decrease as they are calculated on the census population of 1911. The mean rate for the five years preceding 1911 on these figures is 24·75. It has been suggested that the cause of the outbreaks in 1905, 1906 and 1907 was the construction of the Katihar-Godagari railway line, which introduced large numbers of coolies into the district, and which may have disturbed the drainage of the country through which it passed. The years 1894—1899 appear, however, to have been years of equally heavy mortality from malaria, and every year there is a considerable flow of labour across the Mahānandā in the cold weather. It would seem that

the district is permanently infected from the *bārind* and from Gaur and that years of high floods or short crops create the conditions necessary for the disease to become epidemic in the parts of the district affected by them.

Next to fevers the greatest mortality is caused by cholera. For the decades 1892—1901 and 1902—1911 the average mortality per mille was 2·68 and 2·21, rising to 4·84 in 1893, 6·28 in 1899, 4·39 in 1904, and 6·25 in 1905. The disease is largely spread by the practice of throwing half-burnt bodies into the rivers. From small-pox the average mortality per mille for the decades 1892—1901 and 1902—1911 was ·01 and ·12, being highest in the years 1907 and 1910 with the figures of ·23 and ·54, respectively.

Diarrhœa, dysentery, rheumatism, anæmia, hydrocele, worms and skin and eye affections are common diseases.

WATER-SUPPLY.

In the *bārind* the water-supply is derived from tanks which are filled by annual rains and by the heavy dew. This water is generally of a reddish or soapy colour and has a somewhat offensive odour. Wells are infrequent, as the soil is too hard to admit of their being sunk, but their place is taken by shallow water-holes in which surface water accumulates. For the rest of the district where river water, to which preference is given, is not available, water is obtained from ring wells sunk to a depth of 15—20 feet at a cost of from 10 to 15 rupees. The lessened flow of Ganges water through the Kālindrī has caused a deterioration of the water in the Mahānandā for drinking purposes, the bulk of the water now coming straight from the melted snow of the hills and from the swamps through which its tributaries pass.

DIET OF COMMON PEOPLE.

The staple food diet in the east of the district is winter rice and for the great majority of the population flesh also. In the remainder of the district the main diet of the poorer classes consists of the inferior *boro* and *bhādoi* rice with fish, and in the *diāra* during the winter season barley and wheaten cakes. Both the Bengali and Bihari diets are used in the jail.

SANITATION.

Outside the towns of English Bāzār and Nawābganj, which maintain trenching grounds, to which the night-soil is removed in carts, there is no system of conservancy. The need is not particularly felt except in the bigger villages, where there are numbers of brick houses with privies, besides the ordinary bamboo huts. The saving circumstances are the annual inundations and the extensive fires which occur when the dry west winds are blowing.

In the case of large temporary aggregations of people at fairs, the District Board arranges for a supply of sweepers and the protection of the water-supply and medical attendance, but its funds are not sufficient to permit it to grapple with the problems of sanitation in the villages. The town of English Bāzār has a drainage system, but it cannot be said that the municipalities are superior in health to the villages, and in particular the town of Old Mālda is notoriously insanitary and unhealthy. It is curious to note that Hamilton, when speaking of this town which has changed little from his time, compares it favourably with the ordinary European town.

CINA-

There is very little opposition to vaccination, and such as there is, is confined to members of the reformed Mahomedan sects, mostly in the southern *chars* of the district and in Ratuā. Since 1892 the number of successful vaccinations and revaccinations per year has varied from 26,142 to 51,043, and at the present time some 27 per cent. of the population is protected. The figures of vaccination of recent years have increased considerably owing to the prevalence of small-pox.

EN-
ES.

In 1871 there was only one dispensary in the district, that at English Bāzār, which was started in 1861. At the present time there are ten, all of which, with the exception of that at Chānchāl, receive subsidies from the District Board and, in addition, those of English Bāzār and Old Mālda and Nawabganj from the municipalities in which they are situated. The private dispensary at Chānchāl, which is maintained by Raja Sarat Chandra Roy, is in charge of an assistant surgeon, and medical assistance is afforded to outlying parts of the Raja's estate by itinerant hospital assistants. It is one of the best equipped dispensaries in the district. The remaining rural dispensaries under the charge of sub-assistant surgeons are situated at Harishchandrapur, Mathurāpur, Kānsāt, Gumastāpur, Gājol, Bāmangolā, there being one dispensary to every 100,000 people.

The total number of patients treated at the public dispensaries in 1910 was 51,880 or 54 per mille. The only dispensary in which indoor patients are treated is that at English Bāzār. The accommodation is for 22 males and 6 females, the average daily number of patients being 12; there is a modern operation room, the gift of Mr. Hennessy of Mathurāpur. The number of indoor patients annually averages 300. The grants to dispensaries from District Board and Municipal funds for 1910 were Rs. 10,791, and there was raised by subscription the sum of Rs. 3,185.

The total number of practitioners in the district is 424, of whom eleven have diplomas, including the lady doctor at the English Bāzār dispensary.

Fever, intestinal disorders, skin disease, dysentery and diarrhœa, rheumatism, venereal diseases, diseases of the eye, ear and lungs are the most common diseases treated. Operations for cataract and stone are common, but most of the operations are of a minor nature.

QUININE DISTRIBUTION.

Government quinine in glass tubes each containing a treatment of 32 tabloids is on sale at Post Offices. The sales in 1910 amounted to 226 pounds weight.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

RAL THE average annual rainfall of the district is about 57 inches: for cultivation, however, variations in rainfall are secondary in importance to the annual inundations, except in the high lands of the *bārind*. The rate of rise of the rivers and the time that they remain in flood determine for the rest of the district the character of the cultivation, that is, whether a quick-growing or slow-growing crop of rice, the staple food crop, can be grown. The best rice, is, of course, the transplanted variety harvested in the winter, but such land does not as a rule give a second crop and so is less valuable than the inundated land, which retains its moisture in the cold weather.

The ordinary field of the later alluvium is either saucer-shaped with a swamp or *bil* at its lowest part or slopes down towards water-courses. In the saucer-shaped field the water in the *bil* rises gradually and remains for a period long enough to permit the cultivation of the winter rice not transplanted, known as *āghani*, which rises with the water. The higher lands of the circumference grow quick-growing or *bhādoi* crops under rainfall, but drain too quickly for winter rice. Similarly, in the case of land sloping towards a water-course, there is a tract between the bed of the stream and the higher parts of the land, on which *āghani* can be grown, the lower and upper portion being suitable for the quicker growing crops, grown by flood water and rain water, respectively.

In the case, however, of the Ganges *diāra*, the rapid rise and fall of the river level only permits *bhādoi* crops to be raised in the rains, whilst in the *tāl* and *dūbā* land the same effect follows from the great depths the water quickly reaches and maintains. In the stiff clay of the *bārind* which is above flood level, the rain water is retained in the fields by low parapets of earth and the ordinary transplanted winter rice is grown. In the cold weather this soil becomes very hard, and cultivation of cold weather crops is only possible with irrigation.

The southern portion of the district, which receives the Ganges silt, is the most fertile, and next in order comes the northern portion of the district, both these areas being largely

double cropped. The least fertile lands are the higher portions of the *bārind* which have only recently been cleared of jungles, and the rather poor soil of the *dūba* and *tāl*.

Common soils of the later alluvium are clay with a small admixture of sand called *matiyal* or *matal* : *dorash* or *dōāslā*, a mixture of *mātāl* and sand, and as its name implies, suitable for growing two crops : the mixture of Ganges mud and fine sand known as *māshinā* : *chamā* or *jhenjār*, sandy soil with a somewhat hard crust, only suitable for occasional cropping. *Basta* and *rangamati* are the names of the clay soils of the *bārind* which are blackish and red, respectively. SOILS.

Considerable areas in the centre and south of the district are permanently laid down with mulberry and mango : apart from these the main field crops are the *bhādoi*, the *āghani* and *haimantik* and the *rabi* crops. *Bhādoi* is the early crop sown in May and reaped in the month of August-September, and includes paddy, jute, maize and various millets. *Aghani* and *haimantik* are the winter rice crops, the distinction being that *āghani* is sown broad-cast whilst *haimantik* is transplanted : the *rabi* is the cold weather crop and includes *kalai*, *khesari*, barley wheat, mustard, peas, linseed, gram. Of the normal cropped area 27 per cent. is under *bhādoi* rice : 34 per cent. under *āghani* and *haimantik* rice : 20 per cent. under *rabi* food crops : and 3 per cent. under maize. So far as food stuffs are concerned, the winter, *bhādoi* and *rabi* crops are of almost equal importance. PRINCIPAL CROPS.

The area under winter rice is estimated at 290,000 acres and that under *bhādoi* at 234,000 acres. The method of cultivation for *āghani* and *bhādoi* is practically the same. The land is ploughed and cross ploughed from four to eight times according to its quality : a ladder (*moi*) or plank (*choma*) is used to break up the clods and cover the seed, which is sown broadcast. When the plants are about 4 inches high, a harrow (*bidia*) is used to thin them and the land is weeded : the use of the *bidia* makes the crop grow as regularly as if it had been transplanted. A second weeding is given to crops on high land. Rice

The ordinary *bhādoi* rice is sown in May and reaped, as its name implies, in August-September, but a variety of sixty-day rice known as *jethi* is sown in small quantities in April, in the Ganges *diāra*, in the mud at the edge of the river, and reaped in June before the river begins to rise. There is some tendency for jute cultivation to encroach on the high land *bhādoi* area and for more extensive sowings of *bhādoi* rice to *Bhādoi* rice.

be made in the low lands. The outturn in such areas, which are very considerable in the *diāra* tracts, depends entirely on the rate of rise of the rivers and, in particular, the Ganges. If the main flood comes before the crop is ripe there are heavy losses: if the rains are normal, and the main flood is late, there is a bumper crop and there is not sufficient time to harvest it. A total loss of 25 per cent. of the produce of such areas. represents an average full crop. *Bhādoi* rice, unlike winter rice, does not keep and is mainly eaten by the poorer classes.

Aghani, the non-transplanted winter rice, is grown mainly in the north of the district : as its name implies, it is reaped in the month of Aghran (November-December). It is sown in June and July. This rice, though it has keeping properties, is not so fine as the transplanted rice.

It has already been mentioned that transplanted winter rice grows in the higher land of the *bārind*. It is known as *haimantik* rice. As soon as the rains commence, low lying plots of land, or plots near a tank which can be irrigated, are prepared and sown broadcast for seedlings. At the same time the fields are ploughed from four to six times, the rain water being retained in each plot by low walls of mud or *ails*. On steeper slopes the ground is terraced, and frequently there is a tank at the top of the slope from which the upper fields are irrigated as necessary. Before transplantation of the seedlings the soil in the fields is reduced to soft mud. Transplantation goes on from July to September according to the rainfall. Varieties of *haimantik* rice are *chenga*, *tilkaphul*, *kalam*, *tal sail*, *jhagari*, *basphul*, *shubandan*, *madhubinni*, *phorbini*, *binnaphul*, *indra sail*, *malsara*, *jhinga sail*, *parbbat jira*, *etai dadkhani*, *kataribhog*, *kanakchur*, *parijat*, *sonamukhi*, *gopalbhog*. The crop is reaped in December-January, and is largely exported.

The spring rice, known as *boro*, is largely cultivated in the *bils* in which water remains throughout the cold weather. The land up to the edge of deep water is ploughed as for winter rice during the months of November-December and the surface of the fields, which are divided by *ails*, made into a soft batter of mud. Water is lifted from the *bil* by means of the *jāl*, a trough closed at one end. The trough is pivoted, so that the closed end can be let down into the water to be raised : the contents, when the trough is lifted, run out at the other end at the higher level. Usually, to facilitate lifting, in addition to the pedal at the open end, there is an upright near the trough, to which is slung a weighed cross beam connected with the closed

end of the trough by a piece of rope. The operator pulls the weight till the trough rises high enough to let him apply his own weight to the pedal. By a series of *jāts* water can be lifted in large quantities to a considerable height. The seedlings are grown either in a specially prepared piece of ground, or more frequently in the soft mud left on the banks of the rivers as they fall in October-November. Transplantation is done as for *haimantik* paddy, and the crop is cut in April-May being kept watered by means of the *jāt*.

Other *bhādoi* food crops

Other *bhādoi* food crops are *marūa* (*Eleusine Coracana*), *saina* (*Panicum frumentacum*), *koda* (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), china (*Paricum miliaceum*) which are sown in small quantities at the same time as and very often mixed with *bhādoi* paddy, with which they are reaped. Maize (*Zea Mays*) is also grown, chiefly by the Sonthals in the higher lands of the *bārind* which are not suitable for rice.

Rabi or cold weather crops.

The main *rabi* crops are *kalai* (*Phaseolus radiatus*), peas, wheat, barley, gram (*Cicer arietinum*), *mug* (*Phaseolus mungo*), *masuri* (*Ervum Lens*), *arhar* (*Cajanus indicus*) and *khesari* (*Lathyrus sativus*), besides oilseeds, the first five being the most important of the food-stuffs. As soon as the *bhādoi* crops are harvested on the higher lands and when the floods have subsided on the lower, ploughing is commenced for the *rabi* crops. The first sown is *kalai*, which is frequently grazed off and followed by another *rabi* crop. The higher lands are ploughed four to six times for wheat and barley, and twice for peas. *Khesari* is chiefly cultivated with *āghani* rice, being sown broadcast in the rice fields in October. In the *diāra* tracts two *rabi* crops are frequently grown together: the richness of the soil from the Ganges silt otherwise causing plants to grow big at the expense of the produce. The crops are harvested from January to April. For the district the average area under wheat and barley is estimated at 90,000 acres, under gram 8,000, and under the remaining food crops 10,000 acres.

Oilseeds

Of oilseeds the most important are mustard (*Brassica campastris*), *til* (*Sesamum indicum*), linseed (*Linum usitatissimum*), and *sirguja* (*Guizota Abyssinica*). The normal area under mustard is 60,000 acres and of the others 20,000 acres. For these crops the land is ploughed four times, and laddered till a smooth surface is produced. Of recent years there has been a great extension of oil-seed cultivation in the *tāl* and *dūbā* lands.

Other crops.

Jute is grown on a normal area of 30,000 acres approximately. The best quality is known as *poli* jute, grown in the

low land of Gājol thānā. The ordinary *deshi* jute is of inferior quality due in the main to the seed not being properly selected and indifferent methods of retting. *Sunn* hemp is also grown in small quantities for local use.

ry. Mulberry leaf raising is one of the most important industries of the district, the area under the mulberry plant being estimated at 23,000 acres. The conditions which this plant requires to give remunerative results are a light soil above flood level with good drainage, and a water level which does not fall below a moderate depth. These conditions obtain naturally, or can be created by embanking the land, over large areas of the southern and central portions of the district.

The chief centres of the cultivation are locally known as *juars*, of which the main divisions are the upper *juars* round Jot, Dhantola, Kagaicherra, Chandipur; the *diāra juars* round Goyesbari, Jalālpur and Sujapur; and the Bholāhāt *juars* round Bholāhāt and Kasimpore.

The mulberry tree commonly grown is the *Morus indica* and it is cultivated as a shrub, the plants being arranged in lines at a distance apart of eighteen inches to two feet. The plant is propagated from cuttings, and once established is very long-lived, resembling in this and in its method of cultivation the tea plant. It is pruned in August or September so as to prevent its reaching a height of more than 18 inches to 2 feet. The manure most generally used is decayed vegetation from the *bils*, of which the chief ingredient is the *kachu*. In the cold weather this is cut in great quantities and stacked at the side of the *bils* to drain and decompose. Its value is about Re. 1 per cart-load. The fields are regularly hoed and weeded and kept scrupulously clean, as an admixture of leaves of other plants kills the silk-worms. The leaf is also useless for feeding purposes if the ground is flooded, and in years of very high flood there is much loss from this source. Leaf plucking goes on practically throughout the year, though there are three main seasons, November, April and June.

The value of the leaf is from Re. 1 to Re. 1-8 per maund, rising, as the cocoons ripen off, to as high as Rs. 5 in years of scarcity of leaf through drought or any other cause. The average produce of an acre of mulberry is about 300 maunds of leaf and stalks, and taking the cost of cultivation at Rs. 75 the profit is about Rs. 20 per month.

es The profits from the cultivation have led within the last three decades to an extension of the area under mulberry, but they are rivalled by those from mango orchards. It is common,

when the soil is suitable, to combine the two, the land being worked as a mulberry field till the mango trees have established themselves and grown too large to permit of cultivation underneath them. Mālda has long been famous for its mangoes; it is recorded that Nāwab Murshid Ali Kuli Khan used to send an armed guard for the trees the fruits of which were reserved for his use. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton writes:— "The mangoes called Mālda have a high reputation, and may be considered as one of the finest fruits in the world, but few of these grow at Mālda (the present police-station of Old Mālda): all the plantations of the most valuable kinds are on the opposite side of the Mahānandā in the Purnea district (the present police-station English Bāzār). Still, however, the mangoes of the left bank of the Mahānandā are preferable to any others in Dinājpur. As the produce of the mango tree, even in its present state, is one of the most valuable in this district (Dinājpur), for it cannot be of less annual value on an average than Rs. 4,50,000, and as the management is better understood at Mālda than anywhere else, I shall give some account of the manner in which this fine tree is cultivated by the people of that place. A bigha of ground is considered as a direct plantation. In the sixth year or when the trees are from six to nine years old, they begin to yield salaeble fruit; and their produce is reckoned to be doubled every year for five years. The produce now becomes nearly stationery, for although the trees grow larger and produce a greater number, the size and value of the fruit diminishes. The only expense after the first five years is to watch and collect the fruit, the rent, and a little ploughing or hoeing; a plantation will last 50 or 60 years.

"It might be supposed that, with such a large profit, the plantations would be extending fast; but this does not appear to be the case. The great uncertainty of the crop is no doubt also a strong objection to these plantations. In many years the mango almost entirely fails, and in others it is so exceedingly abundant that there is scarcely any sale for the produce. Heavy fogs or rains, when the flowers have expanded, almost certainly prevent the fruit from forming. Besides, a capital of Rs. 40 or 50 is rather uncommon.

"The natives are entirely ignorant of the art of engrafting, which is the only means by which good kind can with certainty be reared. In Dinājpur green mangoes come into season about the 12th of April, and continue until almost the end of May. During the season they enter largely into the dishes of

the natives and are preserved at Mālda in sugar or honey. Some are cut into four parts and dried in the sun; but by far the greatest part is preserved by cutting the green plup from the stone, and beating it with mustard seed, salt and turmeric, to which are occasionally added some of the carminative seeds, such as cummin. Those preparations keep throughout the year and are a common seasoning for the food of the natives. The ripe mangoes continue from the end of May until the middle of July. Their expressed juice is frequently inspissated by exposure to the sun; in this state it will keep throughout the year, and is eaten with milk (*malai*)."

This was writtēn in 1808 A.D., and since that time the cultivation has made immense strides. The chief improvement is in grafting, so much so that the sale of grafts alone is a considerable trade of the value of Rs. 30,000 per year. The grafts (*kalam*) are raised by the inarching method and are sold at from one rupee to two rupees each. There are now some fifty distinct varieties of mangoes obtained by grafting in the Mālda district, of which the best known are the Brindāban, Gōpālbhōg, Kesapat and Fusli, by means of the last of which the mango season has been extended into August. The hole in which the original Fusli tree grew is still pointed out at Nimāsarai. As in Hamilton's time the best mangoes are still grown in the English Bāzār thānā, in the angle of the rivers Kālindrī and Mahānandā, and in this portion of the district the cultivation has encroached considerably on that of the ordinary field crops. There appear to be conditions of soil and climate here which favour the growth of the tree. The laying out of graft mango gardens is, however, extending over the whole of the district west of the Mahānandā, and in particular round Mahādipur on the Paglā, and on the Gaur embankments. The chief consideration, if the soil be suitable, is the facilities for transport, and in particular water transport, as most of the profits come from the export trade. The garden must be on ground above flood level: the young trees are guarded against high floods by planting them in a mound of earth of the requisite height, and protected by bamboos against erosion. The trees are set about 30 feet apart though many gardens are to be found closer planted with consequent loss of vitality to the trees. Ordinary manures are used, but, when available, fish manure is applied to particularly valuable trees. The crop is uncertain, but the extension of cultivation has lessened the chances of total failure, and there is a full crop on an average once in three or four years. The

value of the crop of an acre of graft trees in full bearing is from five to six hundred rupees, though these prices are very often exceeded for well-known gardens. The fruits are plucked with a hand net and will keep for from 17 to 18 days. Besides the gardens of graft trees which are planted mainly for the export trade, there are ordinary village gardens in which the trees are from seedlings (*guti*). The total acreage under orchards is roughly estimated at 15,000 acres.

Tobacco is grown as a garden crop for local consumption, the normal area under this crop being about 10,000 acres. Tobacco.

The cultivation of indigo has totally ceased in this district, though 50 years ago there were 27 factories working. Indigo.

Sugarcane is not an important crop, being chiefly grown for eating and in small quantities. Sugarcane.

Vegetables are cultivated in garden plots for household use and for sale in the bāzārs. The most important are the sweet potato, the *baigun* (*Solanum melongena*), pumpkins (*Lagenaria valgaris*) and gourds (*Benincasa cerifera*), country radishes and melons. Large quantities of onions and chilis are grown in Gājol thānā. Most European vegetables grow well, in particular tomatoes and cauliflowers. Potato cultivation has not made much headway, though it is common in Tulsīhātā thānā. Of trees, besides the mango are cultivated the plantain, jack fruit (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), the *lichi* (*Nephelium litchi*), whilst custard-apple (*Anona squamosa*) and *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*) trees are common. In Gaur there are regular plantations of plantains, but the fruit is of inferior quality. The *khejura* (*Phœnia sylvestris*) and palmyra palm are common, they are tapped for liquor, and the *khejura* is also used to a small extent for sugar extraction. *Pān* (*Piper betel*) for use with the areca nut is also grown. Vegetables and fruits.

The district has not been cadastrally surveyed. The statistics of the acreage under cultivation are based originally on the report of the Revenue Surveyor in 1852. Since then they have been corrected from time to time on the reports of the local officers, and the figures are merely approximate. AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS.

The total normal acreage (1901-02) of the cropped land is returned at 842,700 acres, of which 169,900 acres are cropped more than once, leaving a net acreage under cultivation of 672,800. Taking the figures for the five years 1907—1911 the proportions of *bhādoi* crops not including jute, winter rice and *rabi* are 38·2, 36·9 and 24·9, respectively, the net area under cereals and pulses being 717,000 acres and under oilseeds 64,000 acres. Allowing 70,000 acres for orchards, mulberry and

jute, it will be seen that in comparison with the normal area there has been an increase of cultivation during the last decade corresponding to the increase of population.

Out of the total acreage of the district 332,000 acres were returned in 1901-02 as cultivable waste, so that there is still a considerable quantity of land remaining to be taken up, mostly in the north and east of the district and of inferior quality.

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It cannot be said that the people are unduly conservative, and there can be no doubt that they are good cultivators. Practically rotation of crops is practised in double cropped lands, which beside are annually refertilised by silt. It is true that complaints are heard of loss of fertility, but what evidence is available does not point to any general deterioration of the land. The diversity of crops is partly due to the diversity of people who have reclaimed great parts of the district during the past half century: the Bihari, for example, is not used to jute and dislikes working in deep water; the Sonthal is attracted towards the high lands under jungle and prefers maize cultivation; the man of the *diāra* is unable to live in the *bārind* and is attracted towards the *dūbās* and the *tāl*. The tendency, however, is for the new generation to sink its traditional prejudices and devote itself to the most profitable forms of cultivation. For example, maize cultivation extended in the *diāra* after it was found that Sonthals in the district were willing to trade winter rice against it. Capital is constantly flowing into mulberry and mango. Rice cultivation is extending in the *bārind* where the opening of the railway has given a value to land practically valueless a few years ago.

URE.

Cow-dung manure is used for jute crops; for mulberry, peat soil is also used: at one time also bat guano was procurable in some quantities from the ruins of Gaur, but with the restoration of the buildings the supply is negligible. *Kalai* is used as green manure. In the hot weather the stubbles and grass are commonly burnt in the north of the district. A good deal of valuable cattle manure is burnt for fuel, the supply of wood not being sufficient to satisfy the domestic demand, as well as the requirements for reeling cocoons.

ICUL- AL ES.

Of recent years fairly large sums of money have been distributed under the Agriculturists' Loans Act to tide over occasional partial failure of crops.

LE.

The local breeds are poor, but large quantities of buffaloes and bullocks are brought from Bihār, and the oxen used for carting on the Rājmahāl road are generally up-country beasts. The difficulties in the way of keeping cattle in condition are

firstly the want of fodder in the rains when large areas are under water, and the cattle cannot forage for themselves on account of the crops, and secondly the insect pests, which in some parts of the district necessitate fires being lit at night to protect the cattle from insect bites. Large numbers of cattle from Bihār on their way to the big cattle markets of the Rājshāhī Division are fed in the *tāl* and *dūbās* in the cold weather, regular *batans* or encampments being formed. Some attempts have been made to improve the local breed by up-country bulls, but the resulting calves are poor, being long-legged and weedy. There seems no doubt that the only way to improve the general stamp of the cattle is by selection of the best local bulls and improved feeding. Buffaloes, which are largely used for cultivation in the *bārind*, are nearly all foreign bred. The horses are the usual country ponies and there are large numbers in the district. Sheep are reared in small numbers, and pigs are common, being kept by Sonthals, Mal Pahārias, Doms and other low caste Hindu tribes.

VETERINARY ASSISTANCE.

From 1906 the District Board has maintained a Veterinary Assistant at English Bāzār, and a hospital. The Assistant is largely employed in touring. The chief diseases are rinderpest, hæmorrhagic septicæmia, and foot and mouth disease. The number of in-patients treated annually at the hospital is about 60 and out-patients 1,400, almost all bovines.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

[ATURAL ALAMI-IES.] THE chief natural calamities to which the district is exposed are floods, drought, and hailstorms. Owing, however, to the difference between the character of the country and consequent cultivation on opposite sides of the Mahānandā, the conditions which give rise to general scarcity in one half of the district tend to give a good outturn in the other half.

[LOODS.] Recent years of high flood were 1871, 1885 and 1906. These floods result, not from local rainfall, but from an abnormal rise in the rivers, of which the most important is the Ganges. Most of the rivers and streams which flow through Mālda take their rise in the northern mountains, and are therefore peculiarly liable to sudden freshets caused by the melting of snow and excessive rainfall in the hills. The crops damaged are the *bhādoi* and *āghani*, particularly in the *diāra* and the lower portions of Tulshīhātā and Kharbā thānās. Much damage is also done to the mulberry, as a flood renders the leaf useless for feeding the silk-worm. As a rule floods are not accompanied by direct loss of human life or cattle. The main loss to property, other than standing crops, is, that in the *diāra* tracts the floods cause changes in the main stream of the river, with the result that areas of cultivated and homestead lands are cut away by the river, and the inhabitants of whole villages are reduced in a night to the position of landless labourers. On the other hand, of course, new *chars* form, and the layer of silt which a high Ganges flood deposits everywhere ensures as a rule good crops for several succeeding years.

The towns of English Bāzār and Nawābganj are protected by embankments. In 1885 owing to floods in the Ganges relief measure, were necessary in parts of Kāliāchak, Sibganj and Nawābganj from September to November ; 42,491 persons were relieved gratuitously at a cost of Rs. 11,579, and 6,944 persons were provided with work.

During the floods of 1906 the price of rice rose to 6 seers per rupee, and it was found necessary to advance a lakh of rupees under the Agriculturists' Loans Act. The price of rice was high on account of the unusual demand from East Bengal as

the crops were good in the *bārind* portion of the district which is too high to be flooded.

DROUGHT AND FAMINE.

The parts of the district which suffer from drought are the high winter rice lands of the *bārind* and parts of the Sibganj, Kāliāchak and Kharbā thānās. No precise information is available of the extent to which the district has been affected by drought and famine before 1874. It is, however, mentioned in the life of Dr. Thomas, the first Bengal missionary, that in 1787 he and the East India Company's Officers at English Bāzār bought children at 6 annas each, to prevent their being sold into slavery by their famished parents.

In the famine year of 1865-66 the price of common unhusked rice rose to Rs. 2-8 per maund.

In 1873 the rainfall was 27·26 inches, or half the normal, the deficiency being spread over every month, with a total cessation of rains in September. The result was, harvests of about half the normal crop of *bhādoi* and *āghani*, and of one-fourth of the high-land winter rice. In May 1874 rice rose to 9 seers per rupee. For the relief of distress 3,946 tons of rice were stored in the district, of which 1,315 tons were distributed in charitable relief, 1,253 tons sold for cash, 243 tons paid in wages, and 907 tons advanced on loan. Rupees 26,951 were distributed in charitable relief, Rs. 1,06,762 paid as wages on relief works, and Rs. 48,450 advanced on loan. The number of persons charitably relieved rose from 1,036 in the middle of April, to 6,340 in the middle of May, and 13,009 in the middle of July, but fell to 4,458 in the beginning of September, and to 469 in the first week of October.

Though the population has nearly doubled, and that mainly in the *bārind*, since 1874 there has been no serious distress and in the years of short rainfall, 1885, 1899 and 1908, little relief was necessary.

It is rarely that there are two successive years of short rainfall in the *bārind* and the inhabitants of that part are in the habit of keeping stocks of grain : there has also been a steady increase of *boro* and *bhādoi* cultivation in the *bils*. The probabilities are, however,that as the inferior lands continue to be brought under cultivation with the increase of population, the liability to local scarcity will increase, and make it necessary, and profitable, to protect cultivation by irrigation from tanks, as the value of land increases.

It may be mentioned that in the west of the district there is a local saying that Mālda can never starve as it lies between the *Rarh* and the *bārind*. This means that it is not likely that

both these portions of Bengal should experience a simultaneous failure of winter rice and both are easily accessible from the *diāra*.

IL RMS.

Hail storms are common during the months of April and May and sometimes do considerable damage : two storms of exceptional severity were those of 1865 and 1907.

That of 1907 occurred at 11-30 A.M. on April 1st. It struck the district from the Sonthal hills on a front of two miles southwards of Mānikchāk and extended to Bholāhāt, lasting for half-an-hour. Practically every leaf in its path was cut away : the wheat fields were totally destroyed, and the ears buried in the ground : the mulberry bushes and mango trees were stripped, and *katcha* houses unprotected by bamboo groves, unroofed and wrecked. Some 19 persons were killed, chiefly by falling houses, and numbers were wounded by the hailstones, necessitating the deputation of itinerant hospital assistants. Birds, monkeys and dogs were killed in large numbers, and the loss of human life would have been greater but for the fact that the storm came at the time of midday meal, when people had left the open fields.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

SYSTEM OF RENT PAYMENT.

RENTS are for the most part paid in money. There has been no regular survey and settlement of the district, and the figures for rents are taken from typical estates.

Rents and prices.

In 1842 the prevailing rates were found to be Re. 1 per *bigha* (1,600 sq. yds.) for homestead land, 4 annas per *bigha* for two-crop land, and 3 annas per *bigha* for winter rice land. In 1872 the prevailing rates were found to be for two-crop land 8 annas to Re. 1-4 per *bigha*; winter rice land 2 annas to 8 annas per *bigha*; *boro* land 8 annas to Rs. 3; one-crop *rabi* (cold weather) land 3 annas to 10 annas; mulberry from 8 annas to Re. 1-8; orchard land 10 annas to Rs. 3; the higher rates prevailing in the centre of the district and towards the south and west. In 1888 the prevailing rates in the Chānchāl estate, the largest in the north of the district, and at that time under the Court of Wards, were Rs. 3 for homestead land, Re. 1-8 for garden land and land adjoining to homestead, 8 annas to Re. 1 for paddy land, giving for an average holding of 15 *bighas* an all-round rate of 13 annas per *bigha*.

At the present time the prevailing rates are Rs. 4 for homestead land; 12 annas to Re. 1 for winter rice land; 8 annas to 10 annas for *boro* land; Re. 1 to Rs. 4 for mulberry land and for mango land; 8 annas to Re. 1-8 per *bigha* for two-crop land; 4 annas to 10 annas per *bigha* for one-crop *rabi* land.

The rates at which the inferior land which remains is now being taken up for regular settlement, are :—Annas 12 to Re. 1 for low land and clearance rates for a period of years of annas 4 to annas 6 for jungle high land of the *bārind*.

The figures show progressive enhancement of rent, but the rates are on the whole not high. The rates for *raiyati* holdings, which comprise the bulk of the land, are generally the lower and the lands are sub-let at much higher figures.

The ordinary forms of produce sub-letting are the *ādhiār* and the *trikhati*, by which the cultivator is provided with seed and plough cattle and gives half the produce and two-thirds of the produce, respectively, to the landlord. Sometimes two-crop and is let out to different *ādhiārs* for each crop.

With the increased population and consequent demand for land, holdings have become defined, but formerly large areas of inferior land were cultivated irregularly on the system of *hāl hāsli* tenure, by which a tenant paid rent only on the area which was found to be under cultivation by him for that particular year.

Another form of rent payment by tenants, which was common in the west of the district but is now extinct, was that known as *pauran*, by which the tenant bound himself to pay fixed quantities of produce independently of the outturn.

The *thika* or *miyādi* holding is merely a lease for a term of years. Leases in this form are frequently taken from holders with *raiyati* rights to safeguard the landlord against claim for holdings at fixed rents on the ground of long established occupancy, and also to incorporate *abwābs* of long standing with the rent to prevent the amounts being disputed subsequently.

ENT LLECON.

The ordinary method of rent collection by the larger zamindars is by means of *naibs* and *gomāstas*; the *naib* is in charge of a circle, with *gomāstas* under him. The *gomāstas* are generally local men of some standing who collect from the villagers through the landlord's *mandal*. The *mandal* is paid a small sum and gets a remission of rent, or land at a low rate (*mandalini*) for his services; in big villages it is not unusual for other raiyats to be appointed to assist the *mandal* under the name of *tanki-navis* (accountant) or terms of similar meaning. Such men would also be paid small sums, or hold lands at lower rates.

In case of recalcitrancy the tenant would be sent for to the local *naib's* cutcherry and asked to pay, the last resort being to the civil court.

wābs.

Payments of various sorts are generally made to the inferior zamindari officials, increasing the incidence of the rent. Increased acquaintance with the provisions of the Tenancy Act, and the increased prosperity of the cultivator, which allows him to resort to the law courts, tend to prevent illegal enhancement of rents. The tenant may agree to pay a *chanda* (subscription) to meet special expenses of the zamindar, but will not allow it to be shown as rent on his receipts.

The economic doctrine held by members of the reformed Mahomedan sects is that the earth is the gift of God and man is made for God's service. Man should live by agriculture, otherwise by serving others he would neglect the service of God, as laid down in the Koran. He is therefore entitled to hold land at a reasonable rent. In practice this makes the tenant resist exactions. The Sonthals also, who have cleared new lands

insist on paying clearance rates, even when the land is fully cleared, and form combinations to fight reasonable enhancements.

Besides agricultural rents, other sources of income of the landlord are from fisheries, from jungle produce and grazing rights, from ferries and from markets. Collections are generally farmed. Mention may be made of the local customs by which the last two are protected. In the case of ferries, by the toll for landing on the zamindar's property or mooring boats to it, and in the case of markets, by the toll demanded on sales made outside the market limits.

CUSTOMS OF LAND-HOLDING.

The questions of right of transfer, and the right to cut trees of value, as opposed to merely jungly trees, left in the Bengal Tenancy Act to be determined by custom, have been brought before the courts for most of the parganās of the district, and generally decided against the tenants. The landlord is generally able on transfers of holdings to outsiders to obtain a fee not less than one-fourth of the value of the property transferred.

Diāra CUSTOMS.

The constant alluvion and diluvion in the *diāra* with the resultant want of fixity in holdings has led to special customs to meet local conditions. The landlord is by custom allowed to give washed-out tenants suitable land for their homesteads from that in possession of other tenants, giving these latter a reduction of rent. Measurements are also frequently made of holdings to settle the acreage held. In case of destruction of the houses by flood or fire, the relatives of the persons suffering the loss provide him with new houses. When new land forms, the village takes settlement through the *mandal*, and ploughs it jointly, the produce being divided according to the number of ploughs of each household, until the land has become reasonably permanent. The desire to maintain occupancy rights owing to increased profit of land is, however, leading tenants to continue to pay rent for diluviated land. Such diluviated land is bought and sold even when it is part of the river. The landlord's interest is for the land to be abandoned and new formation to be settled as *khās khāmār* (private property of landlord) at rack rents. The result is that there are agrarian disputes over newly formed land which are complicated by settlements with different sets of tenants from different landlords, who hold shares, or who claim to do so.

WAGES AND INCOME.

The scale of wages commonly paid is printed in the B volume published separately as an appendix to this volume. Although the population has almost doubled within four

decades, it cannot be said that there is a full supply of labour available, and the figures given are mainly of value only with regard to agricultural labourers.

In 1888 a detailed economic enquiry was made in villages Malatipur, Samjhia and Nabagram of Chānchāl estate in the north of the district. These villages were chosen as representing the mean between the richer lands of the south, and the poorer lands of the east, of the district. It was found that for agricultural labourers the average wage per day was 2 annas for men, and for boys one anna, with two meals of the value of 9 pies and 6 pies, respectively, while for harvesting one-sixth of the grain was given to the reaper.

For servants engaged by the year the rates were Rs. 21 for men and Rs. 9 for boys, with food to the value of Rs. 24 and Rs. 18, and clothes to the value of Rs. 2-4 and Re. 1-15, respectively.

The rates have about doubled in 20 years, and the average wage of the present day is for adult male labour about one rupee for three days' work of two *belas*, with some slight refreshment. The high price of rice has also led to the increasing abandonment of the custom of paying reapers in kind. For work such as jute steeping the rates are generally higher and go up to 8 annas per day.

The prices of yearly labour have risen in proportion; such labourers generally take their wages in advance for two or three years and execute a bond to work for that period. They are mostly young men who start life in this way, or persons who have become involved in debt.

The day labourer has regular field work for about six months in the year and in the mulberry fields almost continuously. Their position is not bad, as is evidenced by the fact that very little local labour was available for the construction of the railway line in the years 1904—08, although they were years of high prices. In fact, most of the labourers hold some land in addition to that on which their houses are built, and persons who are merely day labourers are mainly to be found amongst immigrants such as Sonthals, Pahārias and Bihāris.

OME OF ICUL- ISTS.

With the enquiry into the wages of agricultural labourers an enquiry was also made in 1888 into the income of an ordinary holding of 15 bighas and a family of 5. They show, after allowing for the food of the family, the rent, and for ordinary household expenses, a net cash surplus of Rs. 12 per year. In this calculation Rs. 35 is allowed for cost of cultivation, though in practice the main part of the work would be done by

the tenant and his family. Recalculating the figures according to the price of produce prevailing during the quinquennium 1906—1911, the surplus would be about Rs. 60.

Money rates.

For good security in zamindari property the rate of interest varies from 6 per cent. to 12 per cent. in the case of large and otherwise satisfactory loans. For the ordinary cultivator, loans against land and crops are generally given at from one pice to two pice per rupee per month. Other systems of borrowing are advances of grain to be repaid at harvest time, with half the amount of the loan as interest : or the crop may be sold in advance, the cultivator binding himself to sell his produce at a fixed rate to the lender.

Most of the people have dealings with the money lender and a succession of bad seasons will land them in difficulties. In this way numbers of occupancy *raiyats* in the scarcity of 1874 became *ādhidārs* of their lands, particularly in the poorer parts of the *bārind*. On the whole, however, it cannot be said of recent years that the population is becoming more indebted. There is a good deal of solidarity in the village under the *mandal* and it has not been to the interest of the money lender to push matters to extremes. Present prices, and the increased profits of land, are, however, making it increasingly worth while for the money lender to foreclose on his mortgages, and lower the status of the cultivator to that of a labourer. This, however, simply means that the holder of land prefers to spend the credit that has suddenly accrued to him, rather than retain his old standard of living, and strengthen his financial position. Unfortunately the principles of co-operation have made little headway, though loans on joint security under the Agriculturists' Loans Act are readily taken.

Co-operative societies.

There is one small Co-operative Credit Society in the *khās mahāl* at Panchanandpur, working without much success. It would appear that a better field for co-operation is to be found among the most depressed industrial classes, such as weavers (*Jolahas*) and silk reelers.

PRICES.

The variations of prices of food stuffs in seers for the rupee appear from the following table :-—

	1853-54.	1870.	1890.	1910.
Common rice ...	37·69	30·06	15·74	13·58
Wheat ...	40·00	21·26	17·74	11·25
Maize ...	74·12	40·00	...	26·35

The figures represent mainly export prices at the river marts. Practically all the inferior rice such as *bhādoi* and *boro*

rice is consumed in the district by those who raise it, as also the greater part of the wheat and barley and maize; and it has to be borne in mind that the bulk of people support themselves on the produce of their own land, storing rice for that purpose. For winter rice, the *diāra* people, during the cold weather, go with hundreds of carts to the *bārind* and beyond, to cut paddy or buy it in exchange for *kalai* and money, at low rates, on the ground. It is brought home and husked by women and the surplus sold for export. The improvement in communications, and the opening up of Bengal, with the consequence of effective markets makes it increasingly worth while to grow for export. The result is that of recent years much money has gone into the pockets of the cultivators. This, and the demand for labour, has attracted the serving castes to the land, to the detriment of the middle class non-agriculturist. The latter now finds it difficult to get domestic servants. His income has not increased commensurately with prices, and the cultivating and labouring classes being now able to compete with him for articles of food such as fish, goat's flesh and milk, he has become distinctly worse off in comparison with former times. The limited number of people of this class, however, in this district has not made the problem of their adjustment to the new circumstances so acute as in other places.

CHAPTER VIII.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

TRADE AND COMMERCE.

As in the other districts of Eastern Bengal, agriculture is the main industry, 68·8 per cent. of the population being dependent on it. Of these 40 per cent. are actual workers, including 185,379 rent payers, 60,118 agricultural labourers and 2,464 rent receivers. The commercial and professional classes comprise only ·5 and ·9 per cent. of the population, respectively, whilst industry supports 18·9. Of the industrial population 54 per cent. are actual workers, including 20,127 silk-worm rearers, silk reelers and weavers; 23,730 rice pounders; 9,756 fishermen and fish dealers; 5,132 cotton cloth weavers, besides barbers, washermen, gold, silver, copper, tin, and brass smiths, thatchers, potters, leather workers and boatmen. The remaining population includes 24,490 general labourers and 3,559 beggars.

Silk.

The comparatively high percentage of industrial workers is mainly due to the silk industry, which is the staple of the district. Hunter writes that there can be no doubt that there was silk in these parts during the reign of the last Hindu dynasty at Gaur. It appears that *patta-bastra* (silk cloths) were then exported to the important cities of Dacca, Sonargaon and Saptagrām. The Mahomedan conquest is traditionally reported to have caused the manufacture to dwindle away, owing to some religious prohibitions against the wearing of silk. Soon after the desertion of Gaur the industry revived, or, as the native account puts is, silk-worms were brought back to the Mahānandā by one Sita Basini of Jalālpur. It is also recorded that in 1577 one Sheik Bhik, who used to trade in Māldahi cloths, set sail for Russia with three ships laden with silk cloths, and that two of his ships were wrecked somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf. At the beginning of the 17th century the Dutch had an establishment at Old Mālda and it has already been mentioned that the East India Company had an agency in 1686 in the district. At the present time the actual making up of the raw material into cloth is a small industry and the main industry is the production of raw silk. Unlike the neighbouring districts of Rājshāhī and Murshidābād,

where cocoon rearing has lost ground, there is no reason for thinking that it has receded in Mālda. The criterion is the quantity of land devoted to mulberry cultivation, and it would appear that the area of this land has doubled within the last twenty years. The number of silk-worm rearers is 34,596. The three divisions of the industry are cocoon raising, silk reeling, and cloth weaving. Cocoon raising is essentially a small-holding industry and each rearer is in actual fact a small independent capitalist. He has in addition to his agricultural land a few *bighas* under mulberry, and every year he considers the question as to whether he shall sell the leaf or raise his own cocoons. If he decides on the latter course he will go to Bīrbhūm or Murshidābād to buy seed, though of recent years such seed is increasingly put on sale by seed raisers at the various centres of the trade. It is found that seed raised locally is more susceptible to disease.

The worms are of the following varieties—(*i*) Nisteri or Purani or Mandraji (*Bombyx Crossi*), (*ii*) Chota Palu or Desi (*Bombyx fortunatus*), (*iii*) Bara Polu (*Bombyx tenta*), (*iv*) China Polu (*Bombyx Surensis*), and (*v*) Bula Palu—all multivoltine varieties. Of these the first two are the most common, the *Desi* giving the cold weather crop and the *Mandrāji* that of the hot weather. The worms are kept in bamboo trays placed in layers in a bamboo rack and fed twice a day; they begin to spin after 35 or 36 days and the cocoon is completed in three days. There are three main crops of cocoons or *bands*—named after the months in which they ripen. The chief *band* is that of November, comprising the Aghani, Māghi, and Fālguni *bands*; next in order comes the Chait (April) *band* and then the Baisakhi, Jyesthi and Bhādoi. In good years, or when the ordinary *bands* are affected by adverse conditions, other crops are raised, similarly named after the months in which they ripen. The work of rearing the worms is largely done by women.

In reeling cocoons, a small quantity is placed in a basin of hot water to loosen the thread. The operators stir the cocoons round with a piece of stick held in the right hand, and after they have absorbed a certain amount of steam, the operator picks up the loose ends of the thread with his left hand and removes sufficient of the outside covering to enable the silk to reel without interruption. Then carefully taking the threads of 6 to 8 cocoons (according to the quality of the cocoons and the size of the thread desired to be reeled), he threads them through a small hole made in a T-shaped iron, which is fixed at the

head of the basin, and from this takes the thread on to the hand reel (*ghai*), which is turned by a second operator, usually a boy. As a cocoon becomes exhausted, the thread from a fresh cocoon is thrown on to the moving line. The silk pulled off before the cocoon is reeled and that left after reeling are known as *chasam* and *chera* respectively, and both are valuable by-products. They are spun like cotton, as also are the pierced cocoons. From this spun silk the *matka* cloth is made.

It will be seen that the plant required for reeling is of the simplest, merely a basin over a fire-place or a copper, a T-shaped iron, and a reel.

Silk reeled according to the European method is known as filature silk, whilst that according to the native method is known as *Khamru*. The difference is, that in filature silk evenness of size throughout the skein, elasticity of thread, colour, and appearance, are looked for, whilst in *Khamru* reeling so much importance is not attached to these qualities. The result is that from a maund of cocoons which will produce two to three seers of filature silk, nearly half a seer more of *Khamru* can be reeled.

A large number of rearers reel cocoons on their own *ghais*, specially those of the Puro caste. There is however in English Bāzār and Bholāhāt a large population of professional reelers who buy cocoons from the cultivators.

The chief markets at which cocoons are sold are Amāniganj, Subulpur and Jalālpur ; and at the first of these a turnover of Rs. 10,000 on *hāt* days is common and a turnover of a lakh of rupees has been known. Buying is chiefly done by brokers (*dalālis*). To be a successful buyer implies a long experience of the trade and the ability to judge to an ounce the output of raw silk from a sample of cocoons. The price of cocoons varies with the silk market and the competition is between the European and *Khamru* markets. The European market is in the hands of French and English firms who have buying centres and agencies in the district. A small quantity of the cocoons purchased by them are reeled locally at the factories at Bholāhāt and Bāragharia, but the greater portion is reeled in the neighbouring districts of Murshidābād and Rājshāhī, where labour is cheaper. The *Khamru* market is largely controlled by Mārwāris of English Bāzār. The professional reelers contract to supply them with raw silk against advances, and the lack of capital, which this system implies, tends to keep the reelers impoverished and at the mercy of the capitalists. The raw silk of the *Khamru* market is exported largely to Nagpur,

Madras and up-country. The best trade conditions for the producers of cocoons are an active competition between the European and the *Khamru* market, but of recent years there has been a marked and progressive falling off in the buying for the European market, due to the increased output of China and Japan. The annual production of cocoons in the district is about 80,000 maunds, and the value of raw silk produced about thirty lakhs of rupees. A reeler in an European filature earns Rs. 8 to Rs. 9 a month, and a winder, usually a boy, Rs. 5 per month. The corresponding wages for *Khamru* silk workers are Rs. 6 to Rs. 10 per month for reelers, and Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 for winders.

ilk eaving. It has been mentioned that the weaving of silk cloth is a very old industry. Mr. J. N. Gupta, I.C.S., thus describes its present position: "In Mālda, silk *sāris*, *dhuties*, handkerchiefs, sheets and pieces of coating are manufactured. Fine silks, *sāris* and *dhuties*, 15 feet by 44 to 46 inches, sell at from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 per piece, and silk *thāns* for coatings sell at Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per piece of 10 yards, the width being 44 inches. Silk sheets used as wrappers in winter, 9 to 12 feet in length and 4 to 4½ feet wide, sell at Rs. 25 to Rs. 28 per pair. Besides these, *uranis*, or *chudders* used in summer, made of fine threads, length 9 feet, and width 4½ feet, are also manufactured, the price per piece being Rs. 5 to Rs. 7.

"In Mālda there are two important centres, one at Shāhpur close to English Bāzār, and the other at Sibganj. At Sibganj there are nearly 140 families of silk weavers with 180 looms, of whom nearly 50 families weave *matka* and the rest *garad* of pure silk. Some parts of the loom used and the shuttle are imported from Bīrbhūm; a complete loom costs nearly Rs. 12. There appears to be some division of labour among the Sibganj silk weavers, the selection of yarn, its spinning, laying the warp, and the actual weaving being done by different classes of people. Most of the weavers in Sibganj are exclusively employed in this industry; very few have recourse to agriculture in addition." It is reported that the manufacture of silk fabrics has received an impetus from the *Swadeshi* movement, but what the exact increase in trade has been cannot be definitely ascertained. The total value of the fabrics manufactured at Sibganj is estimated at about a lakh and a half of rupees, including Rs. 5,000 worth of *matka*. No ornamental work is done, except in weaving borders of the *sāris*. The *sāris* are sometimes dyed locally, violet, yellow, and red, but the colours are fugitive. The yarn is dyed either

at Fulbāri and Shāhpur near English Bāzār or Khagra in Murshidābād. The *matkas* are sent to Murshidābād plain, are coloured there, and sent to Madras and Bombay. At Shāhpur there are nearly 200 families. Here *gulthishi*, *bulbul chasm* and other patterns of mālda silk cloth are woven, the weft being of cotton while the warp is silk. There are about seven families who can dye the yarn locally, and cloths valued at about half a lakh of rupees are annually exported to Bombay, Ahmedabad and Nepal. *Udu*, *gulthishi* and *bulbul chasm* are sold locally from Rs. 3-8 to Rs. 8 per *thān*, *kadam-fuli* from Rs. 12 to Rs. 16.

"Silk weavers, like cotton weavers, are also largely in the hands of Mahājans, but their condition is more prosperous than that of cotton weavers. The silk Mahājans are generally weavers who have raised themselves to the head of the profession, and employ the poorer members of their guild to weave for them, and make advances of both materials and money to help the artisans to be kept supplied with the necessities of life. The percentage of weavers who are dependent on Mahājans can be judged from the fact that in Sibganj, where there are 150 families of weavers, there are only 10 families of weavers who do their own business, and out of these some three are guild merchants. The Mahājans generally advance thread to the weavers, and when the cloth has been woven it is weighed, a certain percentage being allowed for wastage. *Bani* (or price of weaving) is paid according to the quality and size of the cloth woven and it varies from Rs. 3 to Rs. 7 per piece.

"The daily earnings of weavers varies from annas 4 to 8 per day, but as they do not work all the days of the month, their average earning, may be put down at 5 annas per day. But women and boys earn about 2 annas and 1 anna and 6 pies, respectively. The weavers of the *matka* fabrics, in which the materials are cheap, and for which the demand is greater, earn bigger wages, which amount to 6 to 8 annas a day."

Modern history of the silk industry.

The records of the East India Company teem with instructions to their agents to send better samples of silk and to improve the dyeing, the natural colour of Bengal silk being yellow. It may be mentioned that there were riots amongst the silk weavers of Spitalfields against the introduction of Bengal silk into England, owing to the difficulty of weaving it as compared with Turkey silk, on account of the unevenness and the frequent breaking of the yarn. It was not, however, till the Company obtained possession of Bengal that systematic

efforts were made to improve on native methods of reeling. In 1757 Mr. Wilder was sent to Bengal to examine into the causes of the defective quality of Bengal raw silk. Shortly after, the filature system was introduced by the help of a Frenchman, and the first silk filature factory of any importance in the district was built by Mr. Udney at Singatola. In 1770 Mr. Henchman built the Residency House of English Bāzār as a manufactory for *sufedā*, or lace work on cloth. It was subsequently turned into an ordinary silk factory. Mr. Henchman is said to have first introduced the weaving of cloth from silk alone. The original Māldahi cloth was of cotton and silk, but now-a-days the old names of *bulbul chasm* (nightingale's eyes), *chand tara* (moon and stars), *mazchar* (riplets of the rivers), *kalintarākshi* (pigeon's eyes), which are derived from the different patterns woven, are commonly applied to the cloths made of silk, as well as to the mixtures. As a result of these efforts local history has it that there was a boom in the silk trade between 1760 and 1790, when the Company was able by means of Bengal silk to compete with the imports into England from Turkey of raw and manufactured silk. With the decline of competition from Turkey, that from France and Italy grew and the trade declined. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton in 1810 found it greatly depressed. The subsequent course of the trade in the district is, as has been indicated above, an almost complete diversion of the industry into the production of *Khamru* silk for the Indian market and filature and waste silk for the European market.

In recent years attempts have been made by Government and the Bengal Silk Committee to stimulate the production of cocoons; trained overseers were deputed to the Juars to instruct rearers how to use microscopes for the detection of diseased seed, and seed-raising establishments for the supply of pure seed, under Government supervision, have been established in Rājshāhī and Murshidābād. The system of itinerant overseers has now been discontinued, and instead, sons of silk-worm rearers are given scholarships to the Sericultural School at Rājshāhī, and if they go through the course successfully they are supplied with capital to start them in business as seed raisers. By these measures the district has been largely saved from diseased seed, the chief source of loss, and the industry appears to be on a sound footing so far as the production of *Khamru* silk is concerned.

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eaving.

The most important centres of cotton cloth weaving are the Kāliāchak thānā and round Kālīgrām in Khārbā thānā. In the

first mentioned place *sāri* lengths, *chudders* and a sort of napkin are produced in fairly large quantities, the ordinary country loom being used. In Khārbā thānā the speciality is coloured *mashāries* (netting). The industry has declined owing to the competition of factory goods, but shows signs of revival under the influence of the *Swadeshi* movement. It is purely a cottage industry and most of the weavers have agriculture as a secondary occupation. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton mentions that in 1808 the ordinary cloth in use in the district was *gani* (jute) or cotton. At that time cotton of a yellowish tinge is said to have been produced in the north of the district, but the cultivation has entirely died out.

At the District Board weaving school boys are trained to use improved looms both for silk and cotton, but hitherto there has been no demand for these looms from weavers.

Mango trade.

The custom of the mango trade is that the growers do nothing to place their products on the market. The gardens are sold to the buyers as they stand, as soon as the fruit is set, the trade custom being for one-third of the purchase price to be remitted if for any cause the crop fails. The fruits are picked by means of hand nets and will keep for from 17 to 18 days; during the season the ghāts at English Bāzār and the neighbourhood are thronged with boats, especially from Dacca, and the fruit is exported by country boats, steamer and rail, to Dacca, Calcutta, Murshidābād and other places. The value of the export trade in an average year would be from 8 to 10 lakhs of rupees.

Rice pounding.

Practically no winter rice being grown in the *diāra* tracts every cold weather large numbers of carts go from this part of the district, both to the north and to the *bārind*, as well as to Dinājpur and Rājshāhī districts, to buy winter rice. This is husked in Nawābganj and the *diāra* tracts, giving employment to a large number of women. In the case of scarcity in the *bārind* supplies are got from the *Rārh* districts.

Brass and bell-metal.

The trade is chiefly centred in English Bāzār and Nawābganj, the number of persons dependent on it being 2,161, of whom 653 are actual workers. The articles turned out are chiefly household utensils, of a weight of about 10,000 maunds and the produce is exported all over the province, large quantities being sold at the annual fairs in the Rājshāhī Division.

Lac.

This is a small industry which appears to have been established by Sonthal immigrants during the last 30 years. The tree chiefly used for the propagation of the insect is the *ber* or *kul* (*Zizyphus zuzuba*).

etre.

A few families in the north of the district up till recently earned a livelihood by extracting saltpetre from saliferous earth by the ordinary process used by the Nunias.

The most important fisheries are those of the Ganges known as the Islāmpur Gangapath. There are numerous other *jalkars* all over the district in the rivers and *bils*, and the annual value of the fisheries may be estimated at one lakh of rupees. The custom is for the tenantry to be allowed to fish the *jalkars* for the small fish left after the professional fishermen have fished them, as they dry up in the hot weather.

The fish are exported by train from Rājmahāl and Lālgolā to neighbouring districts; all methods of fishing are in vogue, including spearing by night by torch-light; as elsewhere, there is a common complaint of scarcity of fish.

Fishing boats and boats for ordinary use are built in English Bāzār and Khārbā thānā to a small extent, most of the boats that are to be seen coming from other districts. The local types are the *pānsī* carvel, built of *sāl* wood, from 20 to 60 feet long and the *pēt kōsā* clinker, built of *sāl* wood, 30 to 35 feet long.

ice.

Sola (*Aeschynomena aspera*) is found in the *dūbās* and *bils* and is used for making toys, artificial flowers, floats and the ornamental work in a *tājia* or emblem carried at Mahomedan festivals. Large quantities of *khar* (reed grass) are also obtained from these lands and used in making *chappars* of boats and for ordinary thatching purposes: *nal* or *narkat* reeds are also cut in considerable quantities and used for making the charcoal required by the bell-metal workers.

rts

rts.

The principal exports are rice, pulses, oilseeds, raw silk and cocoons, brass and bell-metal utensils, fish, mangoes, jute and hides; while imports are cotton piece-goods, cotton yarn, kerosine oil, sugar, salt, metals, timber, corrugated iron, and various articles of European manufacture.

es.

The chief centres of trade are English Bāzār, Nawābganj, Old Mālda, Rohanpur, Bholāhāt and Tārtipur. Most of the trade is carried by boats and carts, all of the above centres being on the Mahānandā except the last, which is on a branch of the Ganges, and has risen to importance of recent years through the jute trade. A large amount of trade also goes through Rājmāhāl in the Sonthal Parganās. The recent opening of the Katihār-Godāgāri line will, it is anticipated, lessen the importance of the English Bāzār-Rājmāhāl route. Bullock carts are numerous, also pack bullocks and pack ponies. The bulk of the rice is exported to Calcutta; pulse and

dāl to Dinājpur and Calcutta; silk cloth up-country and to Calcutta; jute to Calcutta, whilst most of the imports are from Calcutta, except sugar from Bihar.

There are a number of fairs, of which the most important is the Ramkeli *mela*. It is held in the ruius of Gaur near the Sonā Masjid. It begins on the 1st Jyesth (mid June), lasting from four to five days. The fair is largely resorted to for purposes of business by people from all parts of the district, and particularly by the Polis, Deshis and Rajbānsis, who profess Chaitanya's doctrine. Cattle and all sorts of articles are on sale, the most noticeable of the latter being the Jangipur blankets from Murshidābād. The business done is calculated at sums amounting to Rs. 2,00,000 and the daily attendance at about 8,000. Minor *melas* are held in the Katadiara near Bholuka, and at Bāmangolā, Gājol and Sādullāpur. The weekly market at Baliā-Nawābganj near Old Mālda is attended by some 5.000 or 6,000 persons. Fairs.

The maund of forty seers, *paseri* of 5 seers, and the seer, are commonly used in the district. The seer varies from 60 to 105 *tolas*. It is 60 at Nawābganj. 72 at Rohanpur, 96 at Old Mālda, 105 at Tulsīhātā. These weights are mostly used for rice dealing, and the explanation of the variations may be that the difference from 60 represented, before improvement of communications, the cost of carriage to Nawābganj, the distributing centre for the *diāra* markets. Weights and measures

For silk cocoons the *kahān* of 16 *pans* is used, and for raw silk the seer of 81 *tolas*.

Mangoes are sold retail by the *pan*, 80 to the *pan*.

For measuring land, the *hāt* (distance from elbow to finger tip) and the *katha* of 4 *hāts*, are used: 20 *kathas* make one *bigha*. The length of the *hāt* varies from 17 to 22 inches, the popular explanation of which is the difference in the length of the arm of the landlord or the surveyor.

For linear measurement the *rasi* of 80 *hāts* is used.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

THE district is classed as partly riverine, and from the earliest time the rivers have been the most important means of communication on which the roads have converged. From November to July, however, nearly all parts of the district are accessible by bullock carts and there is a network of fair weather tracks which connect with the main roads. In the rains all the roads become to a great extent impassable for wheeled traffic and communications are mostly by boat or with pack bullocks and ponies.

A line of steam-boats runs daily except Mondays throughout the year from Lālgolā to Nimāsarai up the Mahānandā in connection with the Ganges steamer service and the Eastern Bengal Railway service. There is a steam ferry from Manikchak across the Ganges to Rājmahāl, which in the rains becomes a ferry service on three days of the week from Rājmahāl to English Bāzār *via* the Kālindrī in connection with the East Indian Railway. There is also a steamer service on alternate days in the rains from Rājmahāl through the Paglā to Kānsāt and across the Ganges. The opening in 1909 of the Kātihār-Godagāri Railway has recently given railway communication within the district: there is a steam ferry from Lālgolā to Godagāri.

In Mahomedan times the main roads were that from Pandua *via* Old Mālda and Gaur to the Ganges, and that from Pandua across the Tāngan into Dinājpur district. The latter road has fallen into disuse, but parts of the former are incorporated in the English Bāzār-Rājmahāl road, near English Bāzār.

The earliest map of the district—Major Rennell's of date 1786—shows practically the same system of roads as that now existing.

The chief road is that from opposite Nawābganj through Sibganj, Gaur, English Bāzār, crossing the Mahānandā at Mālda and thence to Dinājpur. This is the old mail line. It connects with the *diāra* from Kaliachak and Panchanandapur and with Gomāstapur from Kānsāt, being metalled from English Bāzār

to Gaur and for the first two miles of its *diāra* connections. Outside English Bāzār it connects with what was, till the opening of the railway, the most important road in the district, that from English Bāzār to Manikchak, called the Rājmahāl road : this latter road is metalled for three miles from English Bāzār. Opposite Old Mālda the road connects with a road running from that point to the Rājmahāl road and connecting with the latter near Amriti ; at Gājol it crosses a road which connects to the west across the Mahānandā with the Ratua-Chānchāl road at Samsi, and to the east across the Tāngan at Bāmangolā to Patuahāt branching thence to the Dinājpur district and *via* Habibpur to Muchia Aiho on the Mahānandā. The road from Murshidābād to Darjeeling *via* Dinājpur enters the district near Jhelum and passes for a short distance through the district, connecting to the west with the marts of Nawabgānj, Gomāstapur and Rohanpur on the Mahānandā. From the Rājmahāl road at Amriti a road crosses the Kālindrī to Ratua and thence by a cold weather track across the *tāl* to Samsi, Chānchāl, Khārbā to Churamon in Dinājpur in the east and to the Purnea border on the west. These roads are for the most part embanked and bridged and in many places except in the *bārind* are planted with trees: fine avenues of mangoes and other trees are to be seen in places, particularly in the vicinity of old indigo factories. The remaining roads are for the most part mere cold weather tracks with few bridges Generally speaking these tracks serve to give fairly good communication in the cold weather and the dry season in most parts of the district, except in the tract of country between the Tāngan and the Pūrnabhābā, a part of the *bārind* brought into cultivation comparatively recently.

The District Board maintains 20 miles of metalled road and 512 of unmetalled road, the average annual expenditure on communications for the five years 1908—1912 being Rs. 60,000.

Parts of the district are well provided with river communications: the Mahānandā, Kālindrī, Tāngan and the Pūrnabhābā are navigable throughout the year for boats up to 100 maunds. In the rains boats of any size can ply for a few months in the Bhāgirathi and the Paglā, whilst the old water-courses and the *tāl* streams of the north are also navigable for smaller boats and there is a connection between the Kālindrī and the Ganges. Communications throughout the district are worst in the months of September, October and November, when the conditions are very bad. At this period Rivers

of the year smaller streams are useless for boats, and the roads are passable only for foot passengers and pack animals. The District Board maintains a large number of ferries on its roads and there are also a number of zamindari ferries. The larger ferries of Nawābganj, Old Mālda and Rājmahāl are the property of Government.

OSTAL OMMUNICATION.

There are 197 miles of postal communication and 44 post offices in the district. The number of postal articles delivered in 1910-11 was 1,084,660; the value of the money orders issued 11 lakhs and paid 4 lakhs. The total deposits in the Savings Banks were Rs. 77,000.

There are three Telegraph Offices, at English Bāzār, Old Mālda and Chānchāl, besides the railway telegraph offices.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

EARLY ENGLISH ADMINISTRATION.

THE early history of the fiscal administration of the district is that of the districts of Purnea, Dinājpur and Rājshāhī, out of outlying thānās of which it was formed, in 1813, the area thus formed being put under the charge of a Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector. The thānās of Tulsihātā and Khārbā were added afterwards and there have since been slight changes in the extent of their jur isdiction. The powers of the Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector were of an anomalous charac. ter, and hence originated the confusion which for a long time overhung the criminal, revenue, and civil jurisdiction of Mālda. He seems at first to have been to a certain extent under the control of the Collectors both of Purnea and Dinājpur, all communications from the Board of Revenue being transmitted to him through one or other of these treasuries. In 1832 a treasury was for the first time established at English Bāzār; and from that year the independence of the district is usually dated. After the East India Company assumed control of the administration the land revenue was collected under various farming and temporary settlements, until in 1793 the permanent settlement was made.

LAND REVENUE

Since then the fluctuations of land revenue are slight. In 1873 the land revenue demand from permanently-settled estates was Rs. 3,15,444 payable by 560 estates; and in 1912 the demand was Rs. 4,00,658 payable by 618 estates. The difference in demand is mainly due partly to changes in jurisdiction and partly to the transfer of the collection of estates to the district owing to changes in the Ganges. It will be seen that the sub. division of estates has not proceeded at a great rate. The incidence of land revenue in permanently-settled estates is 5 annas 5 pies per acre, whilst in estates managed by Government as proprietors, the incidence of rent is Re. 1 as. 9 per acre. Taking this latter figure as the average rental for the district, the rental of superior landlords would be 18½ lakhs of rupees, on which the percentage of land revenue would be 21·7. The cess valuation gives the figures of Rs. 15,71,036 as the gross rental

and the percentage comes to 25·9. A general revaluation is, however, in progress.

RVEYS. In 1848 a detailed survey of village boundaries was made, known as the revenue survey. It was based on a rough survey called the thākbust survey, which immediately preceded it. In some places the thākbust maps were made on compass and chain measurements, and in others merely by eye, the boundaries being demarcated by mounds of earth, and the distances between them measured by bamboo poles. The *diāra* survey of the bed of the Ganges was done in 1866 with a view to finding out new formations of land not assessed to revenue at the permanent settlement. It has not hitherto been connected with the revenue survey, with the result that there has been litigation, land assessed as excess lands at the *diāra* survey being claimed in some instances in the light of subsequent measurements to be re-formation *in situ* of permanently-settled land.

VERN- NT TATES. Government owns the proprietary right in, or manages in lieu of the proprietors, 36 estates, with an area of 24,176 acres and a total rent of Rs. 37,292. These estates are periodically cadastrally surveyed and the rent of *raiyats* fixed. The settlements were formerly under Regulation VII of 1822 but recent settlements have been made under the Bengal Tenancy Act, where applicable. The most important of these estates are: (1) the Panchanandapur Khas Mahals acquired by Government partly by purchase at revenue sales of permanently-settled estates on default of proprietors in payment of land revenue, and partly by new accretions, of which the persons entitled have not taken settlement. Proprietors of the latter class are paid *mālikānā* amounting to not more than 10 per cent. of the gross rental. (2) The land formerly the property of the East India Company, on which its factory and private residences were built, and which now forms part of the town of English Bāzār and its vicinity. In addition to the above, Government is the proprietor of the valuable Ganges fisheries, acquired on default of payment of revenue. The Collector of the district is officially described as the Superintendent of the Gangapath Islampur Fisheries.

NURES. The most common forms of tenure under the zamindars who hold proprietary rights are the *patni* and *jōt*. The *patni* is a tenure by which the *patnidār* binds himself to pay the landlord the share of the Government revenue payable by the land let under the tenure, over and above a fixed sum yearly to the superior landlord. It is generally heritable and transferable.

A sub-lease of a similar nature under a *patnidār* is known as a *darpatni*.

The chief feature of the *patni* tenure is, that when it is confined to one estate, or portion of an estate, and protected by registration, the zamindar can bring it to sale in the Collector's court, under Regulation VIII of 1818, for default of payment of revenue, such a sale voiding incumbrances. In other words, the landlord, without going to the civil court, can bring the tenure to sale for arrears of rent, twice a year, in a revenue court.

The term *jōt* as applied to a tenure implies that the tenure-holder does not himself farm the land, but merely collects rent from the *raiyats* who may, or may not, have occupancy rights. The *jōtdār* can only be sued, however, for rent by the landlord under the rent law: in other words, if he is recalcitrant, assuming that the rent is allowed to run to the full term of limitation (4 years), as is usual, the landlord cannot realize his rents within 7 years, 3 years being the ordinary time for obtaining decree and for execution. Numbers of these big *jōts*, or tenures, are held *makurrari*, *i.e.*, at fixed rates, and are generally heritable, but as regards transferability there are disputes.

Some of them have grown out of the *ijāras*, or ordinary leases for a term of years, under which the indigo planters held land, and others from the settlement of waste lands with individuals.

Of revenue-free tenures the two most interesting are the Sāshazāri and Bāishazāri endowments. The first of these is a *madad-māsh* and the second a *wakf*, claimed to be granted by the local rulers with the sanction of the later Moghul Emperors, for the upkeep of the shrines of the saints of Pandua, and for the usual purposes of Mahomedan *wakfs*, *i.e.*, education and charity. For many years there have been complaints by the local Mahomedan community, and by the *fakirs* resorting to shrines at the yearly festivals, of the diversion of the funds of the properties from their legitimate objects to the personal profits of the *matwālis* (managing proprietors) who are non-resident zamindars. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton mentions that in his time the estates were managed by Government which supervised the apportionment of the revenues.

Amongst smaller rent-free tenures recorded in the district may be mentioned taraf Pirojpur in Shershābād parganā created by the Emperor Aurangzeb in favour of the saint Syed

Niāmat-ullā and known as a *bādshāhi altamghā*, or Imperial grant under a red and purple seal—a jaigir granted by Lord Cornwallis in Parganā Shikarpur for military services; a jaigir in the north-west of the district, said to have been granted by Mir Jafar to the *fakir* who discovered and gave up Sirāj-ud-daula after his flight from Plassey. These properties have all been long since alienated.

ENERAL DMINIS-RATION.

The revenue administration of the district is in charge of the Collector, under the Commissioner of the Rājshāhī division; there are no subdivisions within the district. The Collector is assisted by a staff of three or four Deputy Collectors and one Sub-Deputy Collector.

evenue.

The total revenue of the district has risen from 6 lakhs of rupees in 1871-72 to 10½ lakhs in 1900-01 and 11 lakhs in 1910-11. The main sources are Land Revenue, Excise, Stamps, Cess, Income-tax and Registration.

All sources are expanding except land revenue, which is fixed at 4½ lakhs, with slight variations due to changes in rental of the few estates managed directly by Government, including the Ganges fisheries.

xcise.

Excise revenue is derived from duty and license fees for sale of country spirit, imported liquor, *tāri*, opium, hemp drugs chiefly *ganja*, *pachwāi*. Receipts have risen more or less steadily from Rs. 1,25,000 in 1880 to Rs. 2,26,000 in 1910.

The chief consumers of country spirit are Sonthals and low caste people. The spirit now sold is di tilled from molasses and imported from the United Provinces, being distributed from the bonded warehouse at Old Mālda to the retail shops, of which there are 43. The average annual consumption is 10,000 L. P. gallons or 16 gallons per thousand of population. In 1910-11 the total revenue from country spirit was Rs. 88,000, or 1 anna 4 pies per head of population. The sale of imported liquor is nominal, its price being prohibitive.

Tāri, both fermented and unfermented, obtained from the palmyra and the date palm, is a favourite drink, there being 128 shops for its sale, producing from license fees Rs. 20,000 in 1910-11.

Pachwāi or rice beer is consumed by Sonthals at their religious festivals. Permits for its manufacture issued to headmen produced Rs. 4,000 in 1910-11.

There are 14 shops for the sale of opium of which the annual consumption is 46 maunds producing Rs. 53,500 in 1910-11 from duty and license fees. As compared with the

remaining districts of the division, the consumption is large. The drug is popular amongst elderly people for medicinal purposes and amongst the industrial population. Smoking of the preparation called *madak* is not uncommon.

Gānjā and other hemp drugs are sold in 56 shops producing Rs. 66,700 revenue. *Gānjā* is popular amongst the poorer classes.

Stamps.

Next to Excise, Stamps are the most important source of revenue. Receipts have risen from Rs. 79,000 in 1880 to Rs. 1,77,000 in 1910. Both judicial and non-judicial stamps show steady increases, the fluctuations as between them are due to the fact that in prosperous years litigation increases and in years of difficulty sales and mortgages are more numerous.

Cess.

The Road and Public Works Cesses are levied at the maximum rate of one anna per rupee of rental and the current demand in 1910-11 was Rs. 89,973 payable by 949 revenue-paying estates, 176 revenue-free estates and 213 rent-free lands. The number of tenures in 1910-11 assessed to cesses was 9,481 and the number of recorded share-holders of estates and tenures was 1,637 and 2,011, respectively.

Income-tax.

The yield from Income-tax is small but progressive in spite of the limit of taxable income having been raised to Rs. 1,000 per year. The receipts of 1910 were Rs. 31,663 as against Rs. 24,887 in 1890. Most of the assessees are money-lenders, grain dealers and merchants.

Registration.

There were six offices in 1910 for the registration of assurances against three in 1880. The inset shows the figures for 1910. In 1880 the number of documents registered was 6,170.

Name.	Documents registered.	Receipts.	Expenditure.
		Rs.	Rs.
English Bāzār ...	5,771	6,832	4,273
Chānchāl ...	2,694	2,396	2,250
Kaliachak ...	3,689	3,442	1,982
Gomāstapur ...	3,127	2,642	2,698
Nawābganj ...	3,250	3,214	2,756
Ratua ...	2,554	2,187	2,039
Total ...	21,085	20,712	15,998

There is one office for the registration of Mahomedan marriages at English Bāzār, but the use of the Mahomedan Marriage Registration Act has made little headway in the district.

HER URCES COME. The receipts under this head are mainly derived from the ferries at Manikchak, Old Mālda and Nawābganj.

DMINIS- ATION ISTICE. Civil cases are tried by the District Judge of Rājshāhi, two Munsifs at English Bāzār and one Munsif at Nawābganj. The bulk of the litigation consists of rent suits and suits on bonds.

IMINAL STICE. Criminal justice is administered by the Sessions Judge of Rājshāhī, who sits with assessors, the District Magistrate and the Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates. The sanctioned staff is two Deputy Magistrates with first class powers, one Deputy Magistrate with second class powers, and one Sub-Deputy Magistrate with third class powers. There are benches of Honorary Magistrates at English Bāzār (four members), Nawābganj (five members) and Mathurāpur (one member). The English Bāzār and Mathurāpur benches have second class powers and Nawābganj third class. One member of the English āzār Bench and the Honorary Magistrate at Mathurāpur have single sitting powers.

ime. Figures of crime are to be found in the statistical appendices. The most common forms of serious crime are burglary, theft, cattle-lifting and rioting over newly formed *chars*. Dacoity on the Purnea border is not uncommon as also highway robbery in the *bārind* during the paddy-cutting season and the season of the fairs.

The district is a common resort of wandering gypsies, known as Nats or Kanjars, who are habitual thieves. There are no professional criminal classes in the district, though the Shershābād Mahomedans have the reputation of being turbulent and lawless. It was the prevalence of robbery and dacoity in the police-station of Sibganj and Kaliachak which first decided the creation of an independent criminal Magistracy at English Bāzār in 1813.

lice. For police purposes the district is divided into 10 police-stations with four out-posts, viz., English Bāzār (Kotwāli) with beat house at Bholāhāt, Ratua with outposts at Manikchak, Kaliachak, Sibganj, Nawābganj, Gomastāpur, Old Mālda with outpost at Habibpur, Gājol with outpost at Bāmangolā, Khārbā and Tulsīhātā.

The sanctioned regular police force paid from provincial funds and recruited under the Police Act consists of one Superintendent of Police, one Deputy Superintendent of Police, 2 Inspectors, 29 Sub-Inspectors, 32 head-constables and 265 constables. The proportion is one man to every

5·7 square miles of area or to every 3,042 of population.

The village police recruited under the Chaukidari Act consist of 1,819 dafadars and chaukidars, and its cost in 1910 was Rs. 1,21,812.

There is one third class district jail at English Bāzār; the average number of prisoners daily in 1910 was 156, the death rate being 7·21 per mille. There is accommodation for 159 male prisoners and 4 female prisoners; there are two cells The figures of daily average of prisoners do not represent admissions for the district alone, prisoners being transferred from more crowded jails. The industries carried on are mustard seed pressing for oil and *surki* making. Jails.

CHAPTER XI.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

THE machinery of local administration consists of Municipalities and the District Board, the former for the towns, and the latter for the district. These bodies are responsible for the provision of roads, bridges, ferries, dispensaries, sanitation and water-supply and superintend primary and middle education. There are no Local Boards nor Unions under the District Board.

The District Board was established in the year 1887 and consists of 13 members. It is a continuation of the old Ferry Fund Committee and Education Committee. The District Magistrate and Collector is an *ex-officio* member of the Board and its Chairman: there are 3 other *ex-officio* members and the remainder are nominated by the Local Government.

The average annual income of the Board for the 10 years 1901—1910 was Rs. 1,05,000, and expenditure Rs. 1,08,000, of which Rs. 34,830 was spent on communications, 24,200 on education and 14,000 on medical relief and water-supply.

The local sources of income were provincial rates Rs. 37,000 and pounds and ferries Rs. 34,000, the balance being contributed by Government.

In 1910-11 the income was Rs. 1,14,000 and expenditure Rs. 1,10,000. The income from local rates was Rs. 42,200, giving an incidence of 8 pies only per head of population, the lowest proportion for any district in Bengal, except Faridpur. The income from leasing pounds and ferries was Rs. 41,000, derived from 20 ferries and 89 pounds.

The expenditure on civil works was Rs. 71,600, of which Rs. 53,000 was spent on communications, and Rs. 4,800 on water-supply. The Board maintains 20 miles of metalled roads and 512 miles of unmetalled roads. The roads, with 13 inspection bungalows, are in charge of the District Engineer,

The expenditure on education was Rs. 23,000, of which half was spent on 279 lower primary schools and the remainder on middle schools. Scholarships are given to the Bihar School of Engineering and the Veterinary College of Belgachia.

On medical relief the amount expended was Rs. 7,406; the percentage of income devoted to dispensaries was 8·4. The Board has spent during the 10 years 1901—1910, an average of Rs. 6,000 a year on water-supply; under the system at present in vogue it contributes one-third of the cost of approved projects for wells or tanks, besides directing construction.

There are three Municipalities, viz., English Bāzār, Old Mālda and Nawābganj. The number of rate-payers is 6,505, out of a total population of 61,394, or 10 per cent. The chief taxation is by a rate on persons according to their circumstances and property and a tax on vehicles. There is a latrine-tax in English Bāzār and parts of Nawābganj on the value of holdings. The incidence of taxation is Re. 1-1-5 in English Bāzār, Re. 1-2-1 in Old Mālda and annas 6-6 in Nawābganj. The Municipalities elect their own Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

English Bāzār.

The English Bāzār Municipality, constituted in 1869, consists of 18 members of whom 3 are *ex-officio* and 3 are nominated by Government, the remainder being elected. There are four wards: the number of rate-payers is 2,125 or 15 per cent. of the population. The average annual income and expenditure, including loans for the years 1901—1910, was Rs. 21,348. In 1910-11 the figures were, income Rs. 18,706, expenditure Rs. 16,393. The tax on persons realised Rs. 7,527 and latrine tax Rs. 5,191. Conservancy and drainage, medical relief and public works, absorbed 52 per cent., 9·8 per cent., and 14·5 per cent., respectively, of the total income.

The town has drainage system recently installed, drains in the inhabited portions being mostly of masonry. It would appear that to make the system really efficient power is necessary, the natural fall being too small to keep the drains flushed. Water-supply is obtained from the river Mahānandā, wells and tanks, and it is fairly good. The cause of the outbreaks of malarial fever which occur every few years in the town is obscure: it may be observed, however, that large areas within the Municipality are covered with close planted mango gardens, the undergrowth of which is not systematically kept down. Most of the roads are metalled.

Old Mālda

Old Mālda Municipality, constituted in 1869, consists of 12 members of whom 2 are *ex-officio*, 2 nominated by Government, and the rest elected. There are three wards. The average income and expenditure for the 10 years 1901—1910 was Rs. 3,833 and the figures for 1910-11 were Rs. 4,665 and Rs. 3,702, respectively. The expenditure on conservancy and drainage was 33 per cent.,

on medical 1·3 per cent., and public works 13·3 per cent., of the income.

The town, though on comparatively high land, is very unhealthy, there being no drainage system. The water-supply is obtained from the Mahānandā and from wells, that from the latter source being of indifferent quality. The urban area, which is small, is confined to a few narrow streets, which are metalled.

.wāb-nj.

Nawābganj Municipality, constituted in 1903, consists of 12 members, all nominated. There are four wards. The average annual income and expenditure for the five years to 1910 were Rs. 8,260 and Rs. 7,273, respectively. For 1909-10 the income was Rs. 10,454 including newly levied latrine-tax Rs. 936. The expenditure on conservancy was 23 per cent. and public works 27 per cent., of the income. This Municipality has made little headway since its inception and is still in the stage of training its members in municipal administration, and overcoming opposition to municipal taxation. The chief requirements of the town are metalled roads and efficient drainage. Drinking water is obtained from the river Mahānandā and from wells, and is on the whole good, though not sufficient during the months of April and May.

CHAPTER XII.

EDUCATION.

EDUCATION.

HAMILTON speaks of the education available in the district when he visited it as being confined to *pāthsālas* and *muktabs* and *tōls*. In the *pāthsalas* were taught Bengali, reading and writing, and arithmetic. In the *muktabs* and *tōls* Persian and Sanskrit, respectively.

In 1856-57 there were two Government aided vernacular schools with 117 scholars, and in 1860 one of these schools was converted into a middle English school, the total number of scholars being 169. In 1870 there were four English schools and 14 vernacular schools either maintained or aided by Government, with 986 pupils, the number of indigenous schools uninspected and unaided being 107. In 1872 when Sir George Campbell's scheme for education was introduced, 179 schools were brought under Government supervision with 4,207 pupils. In 1880 the number had increased to 393 schools with 6,535 pupils, the grant-in-aid for primary education being Rs. 4,000 per year.

In 1887 the District Board created under the Bengal Local Self-Government Act took over the local direction of primary education superseding the old District Committee of Public Instruction.

In 1890 the number of schools in the district, aided and unaided, had risen to 350 with 12,148 pupils or 20 per cent. of the estimated school-going male population, Rs. 8,000 being spent on primary education.

In 1900 the number of primary schools was 450 with 12,197 pupils and in 1910 the corresponding figures were 508 and 19,257, the expenditure of the Board being Rs. 15,517. The percentage of male pupils to those of school-going age was 22·7.

The main obstacles to the spread of elementary education are the unhealthiness of the *bārind* country, in which it is next to impossible to get outside teachers for primary schools to live on the pay given, whilst local teachers are not available; the objection of the reformed Mahomedan sects, especially the Shershābādis, to any education, and in particular secular education; the large number of inhabitants speaking Sonthali and

Hindi, who hitherto have not found it necessary to learn Bengali, the language of the schools. The opposition of Mahomedans to secular teaching is now breaking down, but the other difficulties are likely to remain until economic conditions arise which make it necessary for the children of the lower castes and classes to have some education, however slight, to enable them to hold their own. The number of persons returned at the census of 1901 as able to read and write was 33,093 and as able to read and write English 1,476; the corresponding figures of the 1911 census being 45,904 and 2,793.

ECON-ARY DUCA-TION.

There are no colleges in the district, and only three high schools, the zilla school at English Bāzār maintained by Government, the Chānchāl high school and the Nawābganj high school.

The high school at Old Mālda has become a middle English school owing to the changes in the University requirements, and that at Nawābganj is not in a flourishing condition. The number of pupils in the high schools is 600, mostly drawn from the foreign elements in the town and from the wealthier trading and farming classes.

The number of graduate inhabitants of the district is infinitesimal, and secondary education makes slow progress, as English education is connected in the popular mind with disinclination to do manual work or follow the paternal occupation, and it is not unknown for fathers to refuse to allow their sons to take up scholarships which they may have won in middle English schools

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There are four middle English schools, at Nawābganj, Sibganj, Old Mālda and Mathurāpur, all aided; the remaining schools are middle vernacular, upper primary and lower primary; in practice, it is found that the bulk of the pupils, even in the middle vernacular and upper primary schools, are in the lower classes of the lower primary standards, and the tendency is for the decline of middle vernacular schools. The figures quoted show that there has been a considerable increase in the number of those receiving lower primary instruction, though for the reasons stated the progress has been slow compared with that of the districts of Lower Bengal.

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There is one *guru*-training school at English Bāzār and one weaving school.

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At the beginning of the agitation against the Partition of Bengal a National school reading up to the standard of the high English school was started in English Bāzār and various

subsidiary village schools were also started. The special feature of these schools was the stress laid on technical education as opposed to the literary curriculum of Government schools. These institutions have not succeeded in establishing themselves on a sound footing, partly because the higher class people, from which most of the boys come, do not take kindly to industrial occupation involving manual labour.

Some 2,275 girls or 7·9 per cent. of those of school-going age are receiving primary education, mostly in the lower primary schools with boys. The Barlow girls' school of English Bāzār reads up to the upper primary standard and there are a few girls in the higher classes. FEMALE EDUCATION.

CHAPTER XIII.

GAZETTEER OF DISTRICT.

Amaniganj Hat.—An important silk mart on the Bhāgirathi. There is no resident population but it is a centre for the Jalālpur duars of the silk trade in cocoons and raw silk, to which resort buyers from Rājshāhī and Murshidābād districts. The turnover on a single day in the busy season occasionally amounts to a lakh of rupees and the prices made here control those of the whole district in these products.

Bholahat.—A large centre of silk reeling on the right bank of the Mahānandā six miles below English Bāzār. Up till recent times a filature factory was working here which employed several hundreds of hands. It is a calling station of the Lālgolā steamer service and is a considerable centre of general trade for the surrounding villages. In the main street of the village there is a fine specimen, though now somewhat defaced, of Hindu stone carving, evidently a relic of Gaur.

English Bazar or Engrezabad.—Headquarters town of Mālda district, on the right bank of the Mahānandā, in 25 0′ N. and 88 9′ E. Population (1911) 14,322. Being an open elevated site on the river bank in a mulberry growing country, it was chosen at an early date as the site of one of the Company's silk factories. The French and Dutch had also settlements here and the residence of the Civil Surgeon was formerly a Dutch convent.

The East India Company's factory was of considerable importance during the last quarter of the 17th century, and its 'diaries and consultation' from 1685 to 1693 (with breaks) are still preserved in the India Office under the title of 'Maulda and Englesavade'. In 1770 Mr. Henchman built the commercial residency and factory of the Company at English Bāzār and the modern town grew up round it, materials being largely taken from Gaur. To this day the portions of the town near the factory are known by names such as Lakrikhana (wood yard), Murghikhana (fowl yard) and similar names showing the original use to which the land was put. The factory was regularly fortified with bastions at the angles of the surrounding wall. It is now used as the court house and all the public

offices at headquarters are within its walls. Other public buildings of the town are the jail and the high school. Many of the houses in the town are faced with carved stones from the ruins of Gaur. There is an interesting collection of these stones in the court-house and also in the compound of the Collector's house.

The railway station is on the opposite side of the river, and the town is a calling station for the Lālgolā steamer service. Its trade in silk, jute, mangoes and manufactured goods is considerable, and it has a considerable population of weavers.

It was constituted a Municipality in 1869 with 18 Commissioners, of whom two-thirds are elected.

There is a small embankment protecting the town from the inundations of the Mahānandā. A feature of the town is the extensive mango gardens which cut it off from the agricultural country to the west.

Gaur.—The city of Gaur, a deserted capital of Bengal, is situated on an old channel of the Ganges in 24° 52′ N., and 88° 10′ E., 10 miles south-west of English Bāzār, from which it is reached by a macadamised road. Its dimensions as defined by the embankments which still exist are about 7½ miles in length north and south, and from 1 to 2 miles in breadth from east to west. It has been mentioned that at the time of the Mahomedan invasion another name of the city was Lakhnauti or Lakshmanavatī. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton says in his MSS. that in his time the fort and palace of Lakshman were to be seen on what is now merely elevated ground in the vicinity of English Bāzār, and it may be that the name of Lakhnauti was applied originally to describe the extension of the present city northwards round the king's residence. Hamilton appears to include this portion within the city limits, as he speaks of the area covered by Gaur as 20 square miles. The remains of embankments north and north-east of the city proper still exist, and they probably covered the suburbs in that direction and were defensive out-works. The line of swamps to the east and north-east of the city site show that at one time the Ganges flowed on the east face of the city, which was thus situated between the Bhāgīrathī and the Ganges. On the eastern side a double line of earth embankments of enormous thickness still exists, and it is supposed that these embankments protected the city from being washed away when, in the sixteenth century, the Ganges commenced to recede from what is now the Mahānandā. At the present time the Ganges main stream is 10 miles west of the city, which is clearly defined by the above-mentioned

embankments on the east and by an irregular line of embankments on the north, which crosses the English Bāzār-Nawābganj road at the fifth mile from English Bāzār and continues down to the Bhāgīrathī. This river with the Paglā forms the western boundary down to Mahādipur, from which place the southern ramparts extend almost continuously to the eastern, crossing the Nawābganj road at the Kotwali gate in the fourteenth mile from English Bāzār. South from Mahādipur runs the Fīrōzpur suburb down to Kānsāt, whilst on the northwest of the city is the Sādullāpur suburb.

Almost the whole of the site is now cultivated land under field and orchard crops, with scattered villages. Some jungle remains, mostly along and close to the southern embankment. Of the fort within the city two gates, the Dākhil Darwāzā, and the Lukāchuri, still exist with a part of the ramparts. Within the fort precincts are some remains of the palace wall and various buildings described below. This wall, which is made of brick, is known from its height as the Bāisgazi or 22 yards, the width at the top is 8 feet 6 inches. The clearing of the jungle and cultivation of the ground have led to the discovery of considerable quantities of gold and silver coins, but all of these are of Mahomedan times, and beyond a few isolated carvings there is little to indicate the pre-Mahomedan history of the city. It may indeed be said that the only indication of its Hindu origin is to be found in the tanks with their longer sides running north and south, which are scattered throughout the city and its neighbourhood. Of these the most important is the great Sāgardīghi which measures 1,600 by 800 yards and is one of the largest pieces of ornamental water in Bengal. It was originally the site of the brick-fields of Gaur. On its banks are to be seen the remains of the tomb of the saint Akhi Serāj-addin, described as the first Hindustani recognised as a saint by Nizamuddin Aulia of Delhi. The gateway was built by Hosain Shāh and the inscription on it refers to a building by Nasrat Shāh. The *Panja* of the saint Nur Kutb Alam is taken on the Id Day, the day of the *fatiha* (prayers for the dead) of Akhi Serajaddin, from Pandua to the tomb as a mark of respect. On both Id and Bakr-Id days there are *melas*. Close by the tomb is the Jhanjhaniya mosque which bears an inscription that it was erected in the reign of Mahmud Shāh, son of Husain Shāh. At Sādullāpur itself is the burning ghat on the Bhāgīrathī of the Hindus and the Durbāsinī shrine. It is still a place of great resort on festival days for bathing in the Ganges and is also used largely as a burning ghat. Tradition has it

that at the time of the Mahomedan rule it was the only burning ghat allowed to the Hindus in Gaur.

Of the Mahomedan buildings in Gaur the oldest dates from the fifteenth century. The chief destructive agency apart from the secondary jungle, which up till recent years covered the greater part of the old city, would seem to have been earthquakes and the quarrying of the ruins to provide the building material of Murshidābād, Mālda and English Bāzār. Mr. Reuben Barrow, who visited these ruins in 1787, says in his journal: "Gaur seems rather to have been destroyed by the removal of the materials for other purposes, than by time. These tombs were not long ago in perfect order and were held in a manner sacred, till they were torn to pieces for the sake of stone; indeed such of the gates as happened to have no stone in them are almost perfect, but wherever a piece of stone was happened to be placed, the most elegant buildings have been destroyed to get it out, so that there is now scarcely a piece left except a part in the round tower which happens to have been preserved by the peculiar construction of the building." The first systematic exploration of the site was made by Mr. Creighton in 1801.

In 1810 Dr. Buchanan Hamilton visited the ruins and wrote a description of them. A brief account is given below of the remains still existing. These lie for the most part on both sides of, and close to, the English Bāzār-Nawābganj road from the 8th to the 14th mile. The buildings marked with an asterisk in the description which follows have been restored and protected under the Preservation of Ancient Monuments Act of 1904 A. D. They are seven in number.

The Baradarwāzi* or great Golden Mosque (*Sona Masjid*) of Ramkel, the largest building now standing in Gaur, is rectangular in shape and built of brick faced with stone. It measures 168 feet from north to south, by 75 feet east to west. The height to the cornice is 20 feet. It stands on the western side of a raised quadrangle 200 feet square which was itself formerly enclosed. The front of the building with its eleven arched openings each 5′ 11″ wide faces across the enclosure the partially restored entrance gateway into the quadrangle. There are other openings on the north and south fronts, the west wall being dead externally. The building itself unlike most Mahomedan mosques was completely roofed over by 44 small domes, supported internally on stone pillars and forming a verandah corridor or gallery in the front of the building, and three long aisles constituting the mosque proper. At present only the north, east and south walls are intact with the domes

of the corridor: the western wall with its arches has largely gone and the three inner aisles are now open ground. The inscription stone on the front has disappeared but it is known that the building was erected by Nasrat Shāh about 1526. Near the mosque is the Sanātan tank and the village of Ramkel where the great *bairagi mela* is held annually. Until its restoration the ruined mosque used to be a shelter and camping ground for visitors to the *mela*.

About a mile south of the Baradarwāzi is the Firoz *Minār*,* a brick tower 84 feet high. Its shape is at first that of a polygon of twelve sides which becomes a circle for the last one-third of its height. Most of the stone-work at the base has been removed, but the stone lintel of the door has now been replaced. The diameter of the base is 30 feet. Inside is a spiral staircase with 73 steps giving access to the top, which is shown in Creighton's drawing covered by a dome-like structure which has been restored recently. The inscription is missing. By one account it is said to have been built by the Abyssinian Sultan Firoz Shāh about 1487, though for what purpose is not known. By another account it is ascribed to Ala-ad-din Husain Shāh who erected it to commemorate his victories in Assam. Locally it is known as the *Pir-Asa-Minār*, or *Chirāgdani*. Small *chirāgs* (native lamps) are placed as offerings to the *Pir* on the top of the *Minār*. There are a a number of initials carved in the Roman character near the top of the building, and Mr. Samuells, a former Collector of the district, has recorded the note: "Hedges, the Governor of the Company, in 1683, visited English Bāzār and Gaur and records the visit in his diary. He came up the Mahānandā from Lālgolā and anchored for the night at Baliaghāta at Rohanpur. He visited Gaur with two English ladies. Fanny Parkes also visited Gaur. She was shown over by Mr. Chambers and she saw written in the *Minār* the names of Harwood 1771, S. Grey 1772, Creighton and others. She also found the initials 'M. V., 1683' and Mr. Beveridge supposes this was one of the ladies of Hedges' party. Mr. Creighton visited the tower several times and engraved his name with a knife with the dates '1786, 1788, 1790, 1791'."

Close to the *Minār* is the Dākhil Darwāzā,* or the main gate of the fort. It is built of brick, and dates from the time of Husain Shāh (1510 A. D.). Piercing the massive earthen ramparts at right angles and measuring 112 feet in length, the appearance from the interior is that of a lofty tunnel. On either side of the main passage are the guard rooms. The

brick-work of both ends is externally highly ornamented with designs in embossed brick. The ramparts of earth on both sides have their base as broad as the length of the structure and slope steeply upwards to a height almost equal to that of its arched roof.

The Kadam Rasul,* or The Footstep of the Prophet, is a square building within the fort enclosure, under the dome of which and in the main chamber is a stone on which is kept a foot-print in stone of the Prophet. The inscription over the doorway of the mosque ascribes its erection to Sultan Nasrat Shāh in 1530 A. D. The foot-print was removed from Pandua from the *Chillakhana* or prayer room of the saint Shāh Jalal-addin Tabrizi by Sultan Husain Shāh, and is now kept in the custody of a local resident, the *khadim*. There is an inscription over the southern gate of the enclosure wall of this mosque relating to the building of another mosque in the reign of Sultan Yusuf Shāh, son of Sultan Barbak Shāh, in the year 1540 A. D. Immediately adjacent to the Kadam Rasul is a building in brick and cement, shaped like an ordinary native hut, and containing the tomb of Fatihyar Khan, the son of Dilāwar Khan, Aurangzeb's general. Local tradition has it that the Emperor suspected the saint Shāh Niāmat-ullā Wāli of advising the Sultan Suja to rebel, and ordered Dilāwar Khan to cut off the saint's head. The saint's innocence was vindicated by the sudden and mysterious death of Fatihyar Khān.

Within the fort ramparts and close to them in the vicinity of the Kadam Rasul are to be seen : (1) the Lukāchuri or the east gate of the fort, a two-storied gate-way with guard rooms on each side and a place for drummers over them. It is built of brick and stone and is the only building which shows traces of plaster. It is comparatively recent, being built after the decay of the city as a part of the restoration sketched by Shāh Suja. (2) The Chikha mosque or Chamkan, locally known as Chor-khana or jail. The building resembles the Eklākhi at Pandua, being single domed and 71½ feet square with an internal chamber 42 feet square. Cunningham describes it as the burial place of Mahmud, son of Jalaluddin. Close by is another building known as the Gumti mosque. Mention has already been made of the remains of the palace or Bāisgazi wall. Near this is a plot of ground with a tank, known as Khazanchi (treasury) and Taksaldighi (Mint tank) respectively.

Some hundreds of yards in a north-easterly direction from the Khazanchi is a place known as the Bangla kot, the

graveyard of the kings of Gaur. Near by were, till their despoilment in the middle of last century, the graves of Husain Shāh and his wife and a square enclosure of which the walls were of coloured bricks. There is still in existence a document of a grant by Nawab Muazam Khan at the orders of the Emperor Aurangzeb, of 50 bighas of land for the purpose of lighting the tombs of the kings of Gaur. The property has long been sold and the income diverted.

East of the Lukāchuri and close to the Nawābganj road is a dilapidated mosque known as the Chamkutti mosque of which Mr. Creighton has left a sketch. South of it and some way down the Nawābganj road is the Tāntipārā* or Weavers' mosque. It is believed to have been erected about 1510 by Umar Kazi, whose grave with that of his brother is in front of the building. Only the outer walls of brick remain, they are remarkable for the panel designs in embossed brick with which they are ornamented. All stone work has been removed from the walls. The building measured 91 feet by 44 feet externally and 78 feet by 31 feet internally, being divided by stone pillars into two aisles. The roof was of 10 domes but it came down completely in an earthquake in 1885. The front had five arched openings and the end walls two arched openings each, the corners of the building being finished off in the shape of octagonal towers.

A short distance below this mosque and on the other side of the road is the Lōtan* mosque, built according to tradition by a courtesan. It is in the Pathan style, the main chamber surmounted by a single dome measures 34 feet square and there is a corridor in front 11 feet wide and surmounted by three domes. The walls are from 8 to 11 feet thick. The building is remarkable for the free use of brilliantly coloured encaustic tiles, both internally and externally and on the pavement of the courtyard. Sufficient remain to give a good idea of the original ornamentation, though hundreds of these tiles have been taken away to ornament modern buildings in the district. At the time of the recent restoration of the building it was found that the expense of reproducing them was prohibitive.

Below the mosque the road crosses an old arched masonry bridge and then pierces the southern ramparts of the city at the Kotwālī gate, a fortified arched gateway in brick 30 feet high and 17 feet wide. Near the gateway is a broken wall, the remains of what is called the Pithwālī mosque. On the Nawābganj side of the gate between the Baliā *dīghi* and the Kharia *dīghi* are remains of the Rājbibi mosque.

A mile south of the Kotwālī gate and on the east side of the road lies the small Golden mosque,* also known as the Jani-i-*masjid* and the Khajehi *masjid*. This last name is connected with the tradition that it was built by a eunuch. It is in the Pathan style of brick, faced with stone, and dates from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Rectangular in shape, its external measurements are 82 feet by 52 feet and internal 70 feet by 41 feet. There were 5 arched doorways and the building was divided into three longitudinal aisles, the roofing of the three inner bays supported on arches being four sided vaulting whilst that of the outer bays was the ordinary small domes. A good deal of the roofing and part of the west wall is now gone.

Between the Kotwāli gate and Mahādipur are the remains of the Gunmani mosque which is still used by the local Mahomedans for prayer on the Id and Bakr-id days. Its dimensions are 158 feet by 59 feet and it is built of brick faced with stone. There were 24 small domes of which 9 have fallen and a larger vault over the nave. Nothing is known as to the date of this building and no inscription remains. Half a mile north is the Begmahomed mosque, a small mosque now in ruins, with a terrace of coloured tiles. Opposite it are tombs.

Between Mahādipur and Fīrōzpur there is a piece of ground called the *Darashari* or lecture hall. The mosque, which is now completely destroyed, measured 98 feet by 57 feet. The roofing was similar to that of the Baradarwāzi with 28 domes supported on internal arches, the longer aisles or cloisters from north to south, of which there were four, each carrying 7 domes. The inscription on a stone found in the rubbish of this building ascribes its erection towards the end of the fifteenth century to Yusuf Shāh, son of Bārbak Shāh.

In Fīrōzpur is the Dhanchak mosque ascribed to Dhanpat Saudagar. He and his brother Chand Saudagar were the bankers of Gaur in the sixteenth century and lived near the small Sagardighi east of the Lotan masjid.

A place of pilgrimage in Fīrōzpur is the tomb of the saint Syed Shāh Niamatulla and the small mosque near it. The saint was a native of Karnal and wandered to Rājmahāl where he was much honoured by Sultan Shāh Sujā. He finally settled and died in Fīrōzpur. There is an endowment for the up-keep of his tomb.

Of the numerous tanks within the city boundaries mention may be made of the Piyāsbārī and the Kumhirpir. They lie on the eastern side of the Nawabganj road. Piyāsbārī or "abode of thirst" gets its name from the tradition that the

water of this tank was given to criminals condemned to death, the water being said to have been deadly to life. Near the tank is a plot of land known as the Flower Garden.

The Kumhirpir takes its name from the crocodiles living in it. The common people believe that one of them embodies a saint and the others are his retinue. Offerings are made to the saint of fowls and meat. The *khadim* (priest) of the Kadam Rasul calls out "Come Baba Shah Khizr, take the offering" and as a rule the crocodile will come to the bank, mount it and take away the meat to eat. If the crocodile does not come, it is on account of some grievous fault in the giver of the offering.

Mahadipur.—A large village on the banks of the Paglā and formerly the south-western portion of Gaur. Reference may be made to the article on Gaur for an account of its antiquities. It is a considerable centre for the trade of the *diāra* tracts.

Malda or Old Malda.—Town in Mālda district situated on the left bank of the Mahānandā at its confluence with the Kālindrī in 25° 2′ N., and 81° 8′ E. Population (1911) 3,750. The town is admirably situated for river traffic and probably rose to prosperity as the port of Pandua. During the eighteenth century it was a centre of cotton and silk manufactures and the French and Dutch had factories there as well as the English. The English factory was, however, transferred to English Bāzār in 1770 and the town began to lose its prosperity with the rise of English Bāzār. It has tended to decline throughout the nineteenth century. It is, however, still a considerable distributing centre of manufactured goods for the *bārind* and does a large export trade in rice and jute. There is a railway station of the Katihār-Godagāri line with a branch to the river side and it is a point of call of the Lālgolā steamer service up the Mahānandā. The site of the large market of Baliā-Nawābganj, which is held weekly, is just outside municipal limits. The town was constituted a Municipality in 1869 and has a board of 12 Commissioners, of whom two-thirds are elected. There is also a Bench of Honorary Magistrates. The town proper is situated on a ridge and, land above flood level being limited, the houses mostly brick-built, though showing many traces of removal of building stone from Gaur and Pandua, are huddled together in very narrow streets only wide enough for a bullock cart to get through. This and the resulting unhealthiness has tended to make the place largely merely a business centre instead of a residential centre. The antiquities of the town are: (1) The

Jama Masjid, a building of carved brick and stone 72′ by 27′. It has two big domes and one big arched vault, with minarets at the corners. It contains two side chambers 16′ by 16′ and a central chamber 22′ by 16′. The pillars at the entrance gate are of handsomely carved stone. The inscription shows that it was built by one Musum Saudagar in 1566 A.D. (2) The shrine of Shāh Gada containing the tomb of Shāh Gada and others, as well as that of a parrot which learned to recite prayers from the Koran. Opposite the shrine is the grave of *dudh* (milk) *pir* at which the faithful offer milk to the *pir* by pouring it into a small hole close to the grave.

Two other mosques may be mentioned, the Phuti masjid (cracked mosque) built in 1495 and now given over to jungle; and the Nawāb's mosque, now dilapidated, ascribed to the piety of a Nawāb of Murshidābād.

Across the river and opposite the town of Mālda is the tower of Nimāsarai of 18 feet diameter and height 55 feet. It is studded with projecting stones and is a landmark of the neighbourhood. It is suggested that it was built for a hunting tower and also used as a watch or signal tower.

Nawabganj (also called Bāraghariā Nawābganj).—A town in Mālda district situated on the Mahānandā a little above its junction with the Ganges, in 24° 36′ N. and 88° 17′ E. Population (1911) 23,322. It is a calling station of the Lālgolā steamer service and a great centre of the rice traffic from Dinājpur and Rājshāhī to the *diāra* tracts. The rice comes in carts by the Jhelum road. The town itself is noted locally for its bell-metal and brass ware.

It was constituted a Municipality in 1903 and has a Board of 12 nominated Commissioners. There is a Munsifi here and a Bench of Honorary Magistrates. Baragharia is the name of the village opposite Nawābganj across the river. Till recent times the European filature there was working and employed a considerable amount of labour.

There is a small embankment on the river front at Nawābganj to prevent flooding from the Mahānandā. The place has a large agricultural population, being on late alluvium on the edge of unhealthy *bārind* tracts, the cultivators of which prefer to live in the town.

Pandua or Paruah.—An old capital of Bengali n the *bārind* or *Bārendrabhum* situated in 25° 8′ N., and 88° 10′ E., at a distance of 6 miles north-east from Old Mālda, on either side of the main road from Old Mālda to Dinājpur. The railway station and the steamer ghat from which it is most

easily reached are both in Old Mālda though called Nimāsarai and the road from that place is good except in the rains. Up till recent times the site of Pandua away from the road was covered with heavy jungle, in particular a species of bamboo called *beur bans*, exceptionally thorny and growing in clumps as impenetrable as a cane brake. It has been suggested that this variety was planted by the rulers of the city to help in its defence. Most of the jungle has now been cleared by Sonthals though the population of the place is still small and confined to a few villages off the main road.

The comparative obscurity of Pandua has led to its antiquities being attributed to Gaur, and where a mention of the place is found in history, it has often been confused with the place of the same name in the Hooghly district.

The port of the city in its prosperity was Old Mālda. There was also a fortified post at Raikhandighi some 10 miles further up the Mahānandā which guarded the bridge over the Mahānandā at Pirganj and the military road to the west. The suburbs of the city extended to both of these places, though very few remains have been discovered which suggests that all the buildings of the outskirts of the town were merely the common mud houses of the *bārind*. A curious local tradition is that a place in the vicinity of the Adinah mosque used to be dug for lead.

Dr. Buchanan Hamilton thus describes Pandua :—" A road paved with brick from 12 to 15 feet wide and not very straight seems to have passed through the entire length of the town, which stretches nearly north and south and is about 6 miles in length. From the heaps of bricks on both sides it would appear to have been a regular street lined with brick houses, of which the foundations and the tanks can still be traced in many places. Almost all the surviving monuments are on the border of this road ; near the middle is a bridge of three arches, partly constructed of stones, which has been thrown over a rivulet. It is rudely built and of no great size, and as is the case with all other monuments in Pandua, the materials have manifestly come from the Hindu temples as they still show sculptured figures, often inverted, of men and animals. At the northern end of the street are evident traces of a rampart, and the passage through it is called Garhduar (gate of the fort). At the south are many foundations which have probably belonged to a gate."

The remains which now exist may be divided into those of Pandua and Adinah, the distance between the two places being about two miles. The principal buildings are all, with few

exceptions, by the side of the Dinājpur road. Those at Pandua consist of *asthanas* or *dargas* (shrines) of the Bāishazari and Sashazari endowments, the Kutabshahi mosque, and the Eklakhi Mausoleum, the last two of which have been protected and restored under the Preservation of Monuments Act, whilst the buildings of the shrines are maintained out of their endowments. At Adinah are the Adinah mosque protected and partially restored under the Act, and at a distance of a mile to the east, the Sataishghar and other ruined buildings. A brief account is given of these buildings.

Coming from the direction of Mālda a brick archway called the *Salāmi Darwāza* or entrance gate is seen on the right hand side of the road, the path from which leads to the *Bari Dargah* (shrine) of the saint Makhdum Shāh Jalāl Tabrizi. As the name implies, the saint was a native of Tabriz: he settled in Bengal and acquired property, which he bequeathed for religious purposes. Authorities differ as to the date of his death, which occurred according to one account in 1337, and to another in 1244 A.D. The place of his death is also uncertain: one account places it in the Maldives. Tradition accounts for the various tombs of the saint by the story that Hāji Ibrahim, whose incarnation he was, appeared at the various places where the saint had made his devotions and reported his death, which forthwith occurred in those places. Near the archway at which the saint used to sit for his devotions, is a *nim* tree and local tradition has it that the tree sprang from a piece of *nim* wood used by the saint for a tooth brush. To cut the tree is death and though its branches appear to be low, an elephant with howdah can pass underneath them without difficulty. The chief buildings of the shrine, situated about a quarter of a mile from the arch, are on three sides of a courtyard, on to which give a mosque, a room in which the saint is said to have performed his devotions, and a refectory. The prayer room was, however, erected by the saint Shāh Niāmat-Ullā-Wāli of Fīrōzpur in 1664 A.D., and no trace remains of the original shrine erected by Sultan Mubarak. Another building now in ruins in the shrine which may be mentioned is the *Lakhan Seni dalan*: there is unfortunately nothing to show how the building came by this name. The inscription on the west wall records that in the time of Haibatulla matwali, the building was shaken and Ram Ram, son of Baikal Raj, was commissioned to repair it. The endowment is called Baishāzāri because it consisted of 22,000 bighas of land. The present *matwalis* claim to hold it as a *wakf*. Strangers are fed, and it is a place

(1) Baishāzari shrine, Pandua.

of resort of *fakirs* from every part of India, particularly in the months of Rajab and Shaban when *melas* are held and the *fatiha* (prayers for the dead) of the saint recited. One of the treasures of the darga is a Sanskrit book known as the *Puthi Mubarak* : it is a history of the life of the saint.

(2) Sashāzāri shrine.

Near the Baishāzāri shrine but on the other side of the road are the buildings of the Sashāzāri or 6,000 *bigha* endowment a *madadmash*, which has for one of its objects the upkeep of the *Chhoti Darga* or shrine of the saints, father and son, Ala-ul-Huq and Hazrat Nur Kutb Alam, who lived at Pandua, and died in 1384 and 1415 A.D., respectively. Among the buildings of the shrine on the banks of a tank are the tombs of both the saints and some of their descendants and others : the house of prayer of Nur Kutb Alam, built of brick faced with stones, and containing inscriptions from other buildings : a wall, the praying station, and a mosque called the Masjid-i-Kazi Nur. Close to the tomb of Hazrat Nur Kutb Alam is a single domed building said to be the birthplace of his grandson and resort to which is believed to be efficacious for the forgiveness of sins and the casting out of evil spirits. Great numbers of people resort to it to participate in these benefits or to witness the spectacle of the casting out of evil spirits.

As at the *Bari dargah*, hospitality is offered to all visitors and the shrine is a place of resort of pilgrims and *fakirs* from all parts of India. Two copper drums are to be seen lying near the *musafir khana* (guest house) said to have been presented by Nawāb Kasim Khan Nazim of Bengal for use as gongs to call visitors at meal times.

The saint Ala-ul-Huq was the spiritual son of the saint Akhi Serājaddīn whom tradition says he served with such humility that he allowed the hot cooking pot of his spiritual father to be carried on his head so that he became bald. Akhi Serājaddīn had become so enfeebled by the hardships of repeated journeys to Mecca that he had to be carried about and served with meals at irregular times whilst journeying, thus necessitating this service on the part of Ala-ul-Huq. Ala-ul-Huq was himself famous for his lavish generosity and was banished to Sonargaon for two years as the king suspected that he was assisted by his father who was head of the treasury. His own explanation was that he did not spend a tenth part of what his Makhdum Akhi possessed. His son, the famous Nur Kutb Alam, was equally famous for menial acts of service to his father.

olden osque.

A short distance further up the road and on the same side of it is the Kutubsahi mosque built in the year 1584. It is locally

known as the *Sona masjid*, or the golden mosque, possibly on account of the crown of its minarets being glazed a yellow colour. It is built of stone and measures 82′ by 37′, the roofing consisting of 10 domes.

Just beyond this mosque is the Eklākhi Mausoleum. It is a brick building surmounted by a single dome; the outer dimensions are 78 by 48 feet, the walls are 13 feet thick and the internal diameter is 48 feet. The outer walls are ornamented with carved bricks and over the entrance is a stone carved with a Hindu idol and slightly defaced. The inner room under the dome is octagonal in shape and light is obtained through four doors. Eklākhi Mausoleum.

There are three tombs inside; those of Sultan Jalāl-addīn, of his wife and of his son Sultan Ahmed Shāh. There are two stone posts at the head of the tombs of Jalāl-addīn and Ahmed Shāh of which the latter projects slightly above the tomb, a sign of death by martyrdom. It dates from the beginning of the 15th century and owes its name to the supposed cost of its construction.

A mile further along the road is an old bridge in the brick work of which underneath, is to be seen a carving of the elephant god Ganesh.

A mile past the bridge and on the right hand side of the road is the Adinah mosque. This famous mosque built by Sikandar Shāh in the year 1374 is by far the most celebrated building in this part of India and is described as the most remarkable example which exists of Pathan architecture. Ferguson says that the ground plan and dimensions are exactly similar to those of the great mosque at Damascus. Adinah mosque.

The outer walls of brick enclosed a quadrangular space 500 feet long north and south, by 300 feet wide east and west. Of these walls, the northern, eastern and southern were pierced with windows: the western wall had no opening, but a chamber containing the tomb of Sikandar Shāh projected from it on the outside just beyond and north of the centre of the wall. Inside and following the outer walls, with which they were connected by spring arches, was a series of cloisters enclosing an open quadrangle. The eastern cloisters through which, by an insignificant door, the building was entered, were 38 feet wide from outer wall to inner court. This space was subdivided by means of brick arches on stone pillars into 127 squares, each of which was covered by a small dome 20 feet high. The northern and southern cloisters were constructed on the same pattern, but being shorter contained only

39 squares similarly covered with domes. The innermost squares opened on to the inner quadrangle by arches. The western side of the quadrangle was the mosque proper, the inside of the western wall having the usual niches.

In the centre of this side was the nave of the mosque with the pulpit. It was 64 feet from east to west and 32 feet from north to south and was surmounted by a dome, of which the height from the floor to the centre was 62 feet. South of the nave, and connected with it by arches, were cloisters similar to those of the other sides of the building. In these the common people worshipped: north of the nave, and similarly connected with it, were cloisters carried to a greater height, the pillars of which supported a floor at a height of eight feet from the ground level. This platform called the Badshah-ka-Takht (the royal platform) was 40 feet wide and 80 feet long. The niches in its western wall were four in number and there were two doors, communicating directly to the chamber of Sikandar's tomb. This chamber, 38 feet square, which was covered by nine domes, was on the same level as the royal platform to which it gave access. It was built on a plinth, eight feet high, there being stone steps to the ground level.

The portions of the building which now exist are the outer walls, the royal platform with its domes, the pulpit and a part of the outer chamber. These have been restored as far as possible and the rest of the enclosed space turfed, the windows being partially bricked up to prevent the entrance of cattle. A small opening has also been made on the ground level near the royal platform.

The western wall of the nave and the royal platform is faced with polished black stone beautifully carved, and ornamented with texts from the Koran; the outer chamber is also largely of black stone, and there is an inscription which ascribes the erection of the mosque in 1374 to Sikandar. The brick work, more particularly of the western wall, is highly carved, the censer ornament predominating. On the stone work can be easily seen in places the remains of Hindu carvings, the figures of men and animals having been roughly chipped off by the Mahomedan masons. The only complete Hindu carved stone now to be seen is that forming the drain on the eastern side. It is in the shape of an elephant. It is curious to note that under the steps of the pulpit there was a defaced idol and it has been suggested that the site is that of an old Hindu temple.

About a mile east of the Adinah mosque are the remains of the building known as the Sātāisghar, said to have been part of the palace of Sikandar. They consist of two small ruins on the banks of a tank, and the arrangement of the pipes for conveying water still visible in them suggest that they were bath houses.

To the east of the Sātāisghar is a tank called Rohat Bank in which are the remains of two buildings connected by bridges : another tank south-east of Sātāisghar is called the Nāsir Shahi dīghi and it may have been dug in the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Mahomed Shāh in the middle of the 15th century.

Pichhli.—A village eight miles north-west of English Bāzār near Gangarampur containing traces of old buildings, said to have been a residence of Lakshman Sen. Cunningham found an inscription here bearing date 1249 A. D.

Rohanpur.—A village some thirty miles south of English Bāzār situated on the Pūrnabhābā just above its junction with the Mahānandā. It is a place of considerable trade in the rice season and large quantities of rice pass through it, from Dinājpur to *diāra* tracts. It is well served for communications being a station on the Katihar-Godagāri line and a calling station of the Lālgolā steamer service.

Sibganj.—A large village with many brick houses on the English Bāzār-Nawābganj road 12 miles from Nawābganj. It was formerly the site of a Munsifi and is famous for its silk cloths, probably the best now produced in Bengal. It is two miles from Tārtipur, a jute trading centre on the Paglā.

Tanda or Tanra.—An old capital of Bengal to which the royal seat was transferred by Sulaiman Kerani in 1564 on account of the unhealthiness of Gaur itself. It is supposed to have been a *char* of the Ganges to the south-west of Gaur, though the name is still borne by a piece of land near Lakhipur on the Rājmahāl road. It continued to be the headquarters of the kingdom till the middle of the following century and Shāh Sujā was defeated in 1660 in its vicinity by Mir Jumla, Aurangzeb's general. The place continued to be used by the Moghul Governors till the time of Raja Man Singh. The *char* on which the town was, has been completely swept away by the river.

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